Teaching assistants' views on their preparedness for teaching, following implementation of 'evidence-based' changes to their role in school.

By

Sam Noble

A thesis submitted to

The University of Teesside

In part fulfilment of the degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Social Sciences, Business & Law
Teesside University
Date 29th April 2020

Preface

There have been a number of attempts to define the title of Teaching Assistants (TAs). The National Foundation of Educational Research (NFER) (Smith, Whitby and Sharp, 2004) noted forty eight job titles relating to TAs and this perpetuates some of the difficulties TAs have with their role, responsibilities and identities. The *ad hoc* way that TAs' duties have developed over time in the UK has perhaps done little to clarify their roles (Woolfson & Truswell, 2005). With such a diverse number of job titles for the purposes of this research the DfES definition within for TAs will be used:

> *'The term 'teaching assistant' (TA) is the Government's preferred generic term of reference for all those in paid employment in support of teachers in primary, special and secondary schools. That includes those with a general role and others with specific responsibilities for a child, subject area or age group'.*
>
> (DfES, 2000a, p.4)

The TAs referred to are working under the direction of the class teacher in mainstream schools within the UK.

Abstract

This thesis explores TAs' views on preparedness for teaching; their views were sought following the implementation of evidence-based changes to their role in school. The way TAs are deployed in their role is an area of significant interest to this study and there is growing research that references changes most likely to support their effective deployment. Significant research examples that explore the views of teachers in their role exist, however, the views of TAs, in ways that they are deployed and prepared is less well understood.

Using an interpretative, qualitative approach this thesis explores TAs' views from semi-structured interviews. Analysis of the data was made using a thematic analysis process to identify key themes from the TAs' voices through the interviews. TA 1 to TA 12 is used to represent the 12 TAs who took part in the research. This study showed that, despite additional planning, liaison and feedback time there were occasions where the structures put in place had limited effect on TAs' preparedness. Equally significant are findings that preparedness very much depended upon class teachers being on board with the process; if the liaison and planning time was undermined it subsequently led to the TAs being unprepared for their role. The study found that TAs were keen to keep and maintain relationships rather than report precisely what they had done or know. I also found that TAs often absorbed the time and space issues and sorted them out in the background, resulting in these issues failing to be addressed at a systemic level. Additionally, TAs sometimes used a more informal style of language to describe their experiences and roles in school; this may have had the effect of closing their voices down.

In response to these findings, implications for their management in school are explored, and ways of addressing identified issues are discussed so that TAs' deployment is as effective as possible for the children's learning. These outcomes, that elicit the TAs' voice of their lived experience of the evidence-based changes made, add important information to what we already understand about the deployment of TAs to best effect their preparedness for their role.

Chapter 1 Introduction to the Research question

1.1 Introduction

After working in school as a Deputy Head Teacher, (DHT), Special Educational Needs Coordinator, (SENCO) and mentor for some time there appeared to be some inconsistencies in the way some TAs were working. These included some TAs not having access to liaison time or planning in advance of lessons, others having to plan activities without prior knowledge of the children or resources available to assist them. This prompted a desire to investigate and develop TAs' deployment across the school.

When considering the deployment of TAs, evidence produced through the Education Endowment Fund (EEF) guidance, first published in 2015, played a central part in this study. The report, Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants, formed an integral part of the initial changes relating to those implemented in school along with the Effective Deployment of Teaching Assistants, (EDTA) and Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants (MITA), all of which were expected to improve the effectiveness of TAs' preparedness (Blatchford, Webster and Russell, 2012; Webster, Russell and Blatchford, 2016).

There was evidence that some current practices were being followed in school that, at that time, were identified within the literature as ineffective, they included lack of preparedness through liaison time and TAs not receiving planning in advance of lessons. As SENCO of the school, I had the opportunity to plan staff meetings and subsequent development sessions to look at TA preparedness and deployment. Sessions would include a deployment survey/questionnaire along with conducting a skills audit as a starting point. (See appendix 1, p.220 and appendices 10 and 11, p.229-230) The data collected gave me the opportunity to develop this area further in the first instance and then, as changes were made in school, review them. From the very beginning of my role as a SENCO I was interested in understanding how deployment could

support or detract from TAs' role in school. I was particularly interested in how pupils who received more support frequently seemed to make the least progress (Blatchford, Webster and Russell, 2012). This lack of progress related to both academic attainment and the level of independence pupils displayed. The values I uphold throughout my practice is of ensuring that children receive the best education they can and that staff are prepared and fully trained to empower them to complete their work to the best of their ability. This compelled me to establish the case for retaining TAs across school through developing their deployment, training, liaison and planning time with teachers. I value what TAs bring to their role and want to facilitate greater equality in the workplace for TAs through listening to their experiences. I anticipated that apart from making evidence-based changes, the research would be more qualitative in nature and there was a strong commitment to find out what it was like to be a TA in this school at the most micro level. I knew from the pilot study that the changes were working and wanted to explore how this was the case.

Traditionally, TAs, as the lowest paid and least powerful members of the teaching profession have not had a voice in their settings and as a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), it was evident that this applied to this group of my own school's workforce (Wilson and Bedford, 2008). This became more apparent as I formed a greater understanding of the literature. It was as if the TAs coexisted alongside other members of staff within school, being told what to do and where to go, without much consultation, preparation or involvement. This study sets out to look at these aspects while supporting the voice of the TA within the context of changes being made.

As a school the TA role was considered to be very much an issue for leadership to decide, and the information from the EEF's Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants from Sharples, Webster and Blatchford, (2015) supported implementing their guidance in school. There was a need not just to deliver what was considered to be value for money but importantly an opportunity to

empower the TAs to support their preparedness. The guidance was valuable as it provided a framework for strategies that the school could implement; the SLT were conscious that the guidance would need to be applied within this context taking into account the needs of the pupils and the staff.

One idea through action planning was that a development team would be formed that would include the SLT, TAs and HLTAs. The action plan was set into motion in 2016 and set out a detailed timeline for the implementation of changes, actions to be taken and those individuals who were to be involved. Through its implementation it was anticipated that it would support openness with the whole staff through the involvement of teachers, TAs, the SLT and office staff as stakeholders. By asking people what their perceptions were it would also allow a window into the experiences, feelings and work of TAs within this school's context. Equally, the message would be sent to all staff that this was something of great importance to the whole school. It was anticipated that it would continue to support a collegial ethos and establish a more collectively responsible culture, with staff having ownership over the changes implemented.

It was felt that including TAs within the group would empower them, giving them a voice and a role in describing what they felt worked well and what did not.

This chapter explores the complex development of the TA role as multi-layered in relation to policies and frameworks which feeds into a discussion of wider policies in education.

1.2 Description of the research school

The research school is larger than average and situated within the north east of England in a small market town. Many of the traditional industries have disappeared over the past 40 years and are now beginning to be replaced by new jobs in technology and service industries. Currently, the school has 387 children on roll, from 3 to 11 years old. Most of the children are

drawn from within the catchment area; however, there are an increasing number of children who come from other catchment areas. Increased parental choice for this school from inside and out of catchment has prompted the expansion of the school from a single form entry school to a two form entry school. There are 14 classes from Reception to Y6; in addition, there is also a 39 place morning nursery and a 39 place afternoon nursery in school. The school has an average number of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in line with national statistics. The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is lower than the national average with 56 children currently in receipt of this grant. The school comprises of two separate buildings, a Foundation/Key Stage 1 building and a Key Stage 2 building, there are three playgrounds, wildlife and gardening areas and a large playing field. Working in school there are 20 teachers, 3 Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA), 12 TAs, 4 office staff, a school site manager, 4 cleaning staff and 10 lunchtime supervisors.

1.3 Context to the research: professional and personal viewpoint

Since qualifying as a teacher in 2004 a number of opportunities arose to develop a wide range of skills and experience through working in a number of schools. Once established as a class teacher one additional responsibility undertaken was leading literacy across the school; this role enabled a number of close working relationships to be established with parents, staff and children. As part of this role a number of parents and grandparents from the local community were recruited to support with reading across the school. The result was a community trained in the Better Reading Partnership (BRP) who championed and promoted reading across the school. This in turn developed into a role for parents, coming into school for informal sessions at designated times, this strengthened the community's cohesion and supported parents/grandparents with aspects relating to their child's wellbeing and education. Involvement through an active role in the East Cleveland Education Action Zone Talk4Writing (T4W) group

further developed skills in supporting literacy to disseminate across school. The group worked collaboratively with a number of highly skilled practitioners from mainstream and special schools to support children with acquiring literacy skills. Each practitioner carried out an action research project in their school over a period of two years whereupon experiences and findings were shared. This action research supported gaining an Advanced Certificate in Sustained Professional Development from the University of Hull. The experience was a very positive one that enabled policy and practice to be reviewed in school, with particular benefits for inclusion. A quest to develop more skills to support children with their literacy acquisition was developed. This was an exciting time in school and a number of parents wanted to get involved so they worked alongside the research and supported their children. After eight years an opportunity arose in another school for me to specialise in Special Educational Needs (SEN), join the SLT and set about learning as much as possible to enable fulfilling this role in school.

Training and mentoring student teachers has been part of the role undertaken for the past eleven years, this includes Newly Qualified Teachers, (NQTs), Recently Qualified Teachers (RQTs) and TAs and HLTAs. This aspect of the role is enjoyable, the tutorial sessions and training insets are enlightening and there has been a mutual cooperation and exchange of perspectives and ideas which has developed over time. This led to undertaking a number of coaching and mentoring sessions supporting teachers with their Professional Development (PD) in other schools.

Currently in school many of the volunteers, TAs and three of the HLTAs were originally drawn from the local community, some worked initially as volunteers and others, as they have completed training, were subsequently employed in school. Working and supporting TAs on a day-to-day basis developed my desire to support them in their experiences and training, whether that was through gaining additional academic qualifications or training for specific interventions to be delivered.

Working as a DHT, SENCO and Key Stage Leader with responsibility for training and mentoring a large number of staff, volunteers and students across school was an ideal platform from which to develop practice within school. Within this role support with implementing new initiatives and regular contributions to professional development of staff through inset days and ongoing training has been made possible. As volunteers, or staff, gain qualifications or, if they express an interest to work in a particular area, I took opportunities to ensure that they had access to what they needed to complete assignments or vocational qualifications could be facilitated.

In these roles and professional commitments I felt a need to investigate the voices and perspectives that TAs had about their work and lives as they volunteered for additional responsibilities, welcomed additional training and looked for opportunities to develop their skills. When searching the literature there appeared to be many studies that sampled the views of teachers, but a paucity of studies that actually explored what it was like being a TA. This was the rationale behind the research question.

My Local Education Authority (LEA) held a meeting to share findings from the EEF relating to TAs' effectiveness and what impact they had on raising standards. Following changes within the LA in 2014, there was a strong feeling that during the meeting TAs were considered to be almost at risk of being made redundant. The viewpoint of many Head Teachers and SENCOs present was that, if effectively directed, TAs were very valuable in schools. As a result schools were being directed to the EEF research, from Sharples, Webster and Blatchford, (2015) which was available online, to support more effective deployment and ultimately raise attainment. Although I am not questioning the importance of attainment, the catalyst for this research was to illicit TAs' views about their work. An action plan was developed with an achievable timeline to look at what could be implemented to develop this idea further.

Therefore, no detachment from the field within this research is claimed, it will remain very much an insider perspective. There is a strong commitment to the continual support of all volunteers, TAs and HLTAs who work and are deployed throughout school.

1.4 Policy and context of TAs role in school

Since the Labour Government's initiative through the Department for Education (DfE), introduced Teachers: meeting the challenge of change in 1998, numbers of TAs have greatly increased year on year (DfE, 2016). Many classes now have a TA assigned to them, or have additional support at some point throughout the day (Blatchford *et al*. 2009a; 2009d; Coe, 2013; Rubie-Davies *et al. 2010*). Government statistics show that in November 2016 there were 265,600 TAs in full-time employment (FTEs) in state schools across England, accounting for 28% of the workforce: this shows an increase in full-time positions of 2,600 TAs since 2015 (DfE, 2016). The nursery and primary phase clearly showed that TAs increased by 3.2 thousand; from 174.5 thousand FTEs in 2015 to 177.7 thousand FTEs in 2016.

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
All TAs	219.8	232.3	243.7	255.1	263.0	265.6
Nursery & Primary TAs	136.9	146.7	156.2	166.2	174.5	177.7

Table 1. Composition of the schools' workforce (full-time equivalent): England, 2011-2016, thousands (School Workforce in England: November 2016).

According to school workforce statistics collated during 2016 most school TAs work part-time; 85.1% of TAs worked part-time (DfE, 2016). Similarly, with the gender exploration in Chapter 2, some of the reasons for part-time female working will be explored and synthesised in the literature review.

There are a number of reasons as to why there has been such an increase in the numbers of TAs over the past 20 years. A significant contributing factor is that following The Warnock Report (DES, 1978) there has been a significant move in terms of how SEN is addressed in schools. There was greater emphasis on mainstream education for children with SEN and a move away from the medical model of education. The medical model of disability or need focussed on the child's disabilities as the issue to be addressed or as the basis for policy, rather than seeing the need for the environment to support meeting the needs of the child (Glazzard, 2011; McDonnell, 2003). The medical model uses a number of labels based on a 'diagnosis' that the individual is given, further described as an impairment, which is seen as the problem, not the environment (Barnes and Mercer, 2006; McDonnell, 2003). More recently, with the 2014 Children and Families Act (Legislation.gov.uk, 2014) and the SEND Code of Practice: 0 – 25 years, 2014; 2015, (DfE) and the Department of Health (DoH), 2014; 2015) which are both embedded in the assumption of mainstream education, there have been significant changes in the way SEN is addressed in schools (DfE 2014; 2015; DoH, 2014; 2015).

This discourse around SEN has been partly responsible for the increase in the number of TAs that provide support for children who have some form of SEN. There have been a number of instances where statements in the past identified hours of support, leading to 1:1 TA support (Blatchford, Webster and Russell, 2012; Glazzard, 2011). The difficulty with 1:1 support is that this can create other difficulties that were not present in the first instance. Although existing statements are now being converted to an individual Education Health Care Plan (EHCP), which have moved away from hours awarded, there are still areas of tension.

Historically, there has been a trend for TAs to take children out of class or in small groups and work with delivering interventions (Alborz *et al.* 2009; Blatchford *et al*. 2009a; Gerber *et al*. 2001). Careful consideration of available literature, findings from the Centre of Education and Monitoring (CEM), the DISS projects and EEF data were used to support practitioner craft

knowledge and implementing initial changes in my school (Alborz *et al*. 2009; Blatchford *et al.* 2006; 2009a; 2009d; Coe, 2013; Rubie-Davies *et al. 2010*). This supported establishing what level of support or interventions would be most appropriate for the children in school. Emphasis was placed on small group work through interventions that TAs are specifically trained for. The class teacher was also placed firmly in control of the planning and delivery of work for the children in their care. Emphasis was placed on deployment of TAs and care was taken so that children with SEN received teacher support and specialist support as required.

As school budgets are reduced in real terms there is greater pressure on school leaders to better manage spending in all areas, whilst still being charged with delivering the best possible education to the children in their care (Chowdry & Sibieta, 2011). Costs associated with hiring, training and deploying TAs effectively have become an issue in many schools (Alborz *et al*. 2009; Blatchford *et al*. 2006; 2009a; 2009d; Butt and Lance, 2009). Showing value for money and being accountable for all expenditure means that effectiveness of every resource has, in recent years, been carefully scrutinised (DfE, 2016; Hanushek, 2006).

This has created an undercurrent of cost cutting and disposability within the discourse surrounding TAs, as some positions are not replaced when people leave and the media seem to be suggesting that the austerity measures put in place are impacting on schools and their ability to employ TAs (Drury, 2013).

In 2003 the (Department for Education (DfE) commissioned the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) projects to research the characteristics of TAs', their deployment and the impact they had. Following the National Agreement in 2003 the Aspects of Workforce Remodelling aimed to report on how schools were implementing those changes identified with the National Agreement 2003. This resulted in government, teaching unions and employers working together to remodel the workforce in schools to reduce teacher workload and raise

standards (DfE, 2010). The Agreement identified that TAs would have a wider number of career opportunities offered to them and a number of newly created roles (DfE, 2010). There are difficulties with this remodelling that have marginalized and disadvantaged TAs in respect of gender and pay which will be explored within the literature review in Chapter 2 (Gunter, 2007).

Within the research school there are a total of fifteen TAs, which comprise of twelve Level 3 TAs and three Level 4 HLTAs. Their full job descriptions are detailed in appendices 12, 13 and 14 p.231-236. There are three Levels, Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4 which relate to the remodelling agreement. The job descriptions included are intended to inform the reader of the differences in roles and responsibilities between the different levels of TA qualifications.

1.5 Context of the research: Education policy and reforms

Of particular interest to this study are the approaches to conducting research around the workforce from the work of Ball (Ball, 1990; Maguire and Ball 1994) and his understanding of the political, social, economic and context within which schools and teaching operate. Internalising some of his conceptual framework and considering how it can support research has supported developing my viewpoint on how educators understand their practices (Gunter, 2013).

Ball (2013) notes that both Labour and the Coalition governments placed high value on 'raising standards' and the introduction of League Tables presented itself as a form of 'natural history,' with the ensuing visibility and ranking of practice being examples of the further politicising of education. This politicising is carried out through bureaucratic monitoring and 'reform', particularly focussed around an increased amount of testing undertaken in schools. This testing generates data and statistics that lead to a relentless culture of target setting (Ball, 2013; Ratcliffe, 2014). An awareness and realisation developed upon reading the work of Ball (2013) and that of Foucault, one of his intellectual inspirations, that there have been a number of

occasions where there has been a tendency to use terminology to shift the 'f*ocus*' of practice onto performativity, rather than what teachers have seen as the 'real issues' (Foucault, 2010b, p.229).

There are significant tests and targets set across the educational phases but for the purposes of this study the focus will be on the primary phase. Within the primary phase statutory assessments from nursery until the end of Year 2 are conducted on a yearly basis. When children leave nursery and move into Reception class the children are assessed on whether or not they have achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). A year later in Year 1 the children undergo phonics testing during the second week in June. Less than a year later the children are tested again during the summer term at the end of Key Stage 1 (KS1), Year 2, using Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs), and there is a recent addition of a statutory multiplication tables check, which will be administered from June 2020 in Year 4. At the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2) in Year 6 the children are tested using SATs as a benchmark, which measures progress and attainment from one key stage to another. This means that when the online tables tests are in place there will only be years 3 and 5 where statutory tests are not currently carried out.

Ball (2012) explains that although the money supply is obviously inextricably linked to education policy it is often the case that this is not directly referred to in policies. Ball notes that policies, services and aspects of the public sector are traded, bought and sold as required. These changes have put greater tensions on the public sector to be more accountable to shareholders and ultimately more profitable (Ball, 2012, p.24). This has in part brought about changes that mean that educational establishments are becoming more enterprising with the way they approach their budgets. Some money may be saved or raised, by other means, for example by the increase of part-time working and casual contracts, as TAs, who are often, by their personal

circumstances, established in part-time work (Connell, Fawcett and Meagher, 2009). This dominant neoliberalism economic approach, encouraging labour 'flexibility', it is argued, has also allowed for savings to be made within educational organisations. Ball's conceptual framework combines theoretical perspectives in order to ameliorate complex changes experienced in schools; in so doing he provides a framework for critical analysis of policy and reform (Ozga, 2000).

According to Murray (2012) the impact of performativity agendas over the past decade or so has led to significant tensions for teacher training and established teachers. Successive governments have introduced a number of public sector reforms that have, in turn, led to the increased importance of the performativity of education, leading to seemingly endless target setting (Ball, 2012). Although some would argue that this has brought about greater accountability within educational settings it has become necessary for professionals to adjust part of the workforce to top-down changes related to political agendas only tenuously, if at all, concerned with the professed traditions of their practice (Davies, 2003).

Ball (2012) has named the tide of policies introduced by government and the logic with which they are introduced into the workplace as performativity:

> *'the first-order effect of performativity is to reorient pedagogical and scholarly activities towards those which are likely to have a positive impact on measurable performance outcomes and are a deflection of attention away from aspects of social, emotional or moral development that have no immediate measurable performative value'.*
>
> (Ball, 2012, p.30).

The concept of performativity within this educational debate makes sense of a number of connections between teachers, TAs and government policies pertaining to teaching children and some of the current tensions within education (Ball, 2003). The literature review in Chapter 2 will show how some TAs have experienced challenges of planning, preparing and delivering

provision for children with SEN. This will be clearly stated that it should be a teacher's responsibility for the progress of every child in their care (Glazzard, 2011).

HLTAs during the initial part of this study expressed that they felt a '*pressure*' to get the children to where they needed to be, an example of the results of the performativity flowing from the policy focus on 'standards' discussed previously. Chapter 2 clearly identifies that research supports the idea that the teacher is now seen as responsible for the attainment of the children they teach (Giangreco, Smith and Pinckney, 2006), yet, the HLTAs felt a pressure to '*get the children to where the data said they should be';* which was concerning, for me, if this was their perception of the way that policy was being interpreted. Ball (2003) suggests that performativity leads to teachers, and others in the public sector, having to reorganise the way they work to meet targets through evaluation, assessments and impact. What government policy does not do, of course, is to inform educational establishments how to implement policies; this can lead to tensions, particularly through the way the message is delivered to those who will be implementing the changes (Ball, 2003). This in turn can create an opportunity for some individuals to flourish within this landscape, conversely for others it can create a significant inner struggle as their beliefs and thoughts are challenged, causing them a degree of distress (Ball, 2003). Establishing the perspectives of TAs on their work and preparedness could, therefore, assist in understanding what it is like for them within their everyday work and how they navigate these power situations. There was also an internal inner conflict for myself as I gained a new awareness that some of the TAs appeared to be struggling with the way they were being asked to do some types of work. Some examples of the tensions they were experiencing were shared by the TAs during the pilot study carried out in the summer of 2016. One HLTA disclosed '*I just want to do my best for the children',* another TA expressed the following criticism:

> '*the current curriculum is not fit for some of the children we are working with, what is it setting them up for, we need a more individual curriculum, all we seem to do is test them*.'

It would seem that policies in which TAs and teachers work may initially be viewed as offering greater freedoms and autonomy over schools when the reality maybe quite different (Ball 2003). The accountability faced in schools is furthermore increased through continuous monitoring, some of which may be documented or published, League Tables, appraisals, peer assessments, inspections, observations or site visits (Ball, 2003). This can all have the effect of pressure on schools to improve, to become outstanding, or to be doing the right thing (Ball, 2003). Schools spend so much time collecting and working on 'performative information' that there is reduced time to focus on other improvements schools may wish to make (Elliot, 1996).

Armed with this information and working as the SENCO within school it was important for me that a discussion took place around these important points.

1.6 Rationale for the current study

The pre-study changes made in school were informed by the DISS, Wider Pedagogical Role (WPR) and EDTA studies, presented through the EEF. The school implemented the following:

- Supporting changes with evidence from the DISS, WPR and EDTA studies
- A 'Pilot' study
- A skills audit to aid preparedness
- Professional development days to develop appropriate skills
- Timetable to support TA liaison, planning and preparation / feedback with class teachers
- Planning dissemination altered to support preparedness
- Dedicated planning and preparation time for HLTAs across school - equal to teachers planning, preparation and assessment time.

A 'pilot' study was carried out during the summer term of 2016, which consisted of semi-structured interviews with two HLTAs and a TA; all three were asked a number of questions

acting as starting points for discussion (see appendix 2, p.221). The information gathered from this supported the idea that the TAs had a number of significant points they wished to make about how they perceived their work and what would '*make things better within the workplace*' in their opinion. Pilot studies like this can help to identify practical problems with data collection that can be addressed before the main study takes place and provide a focus for later interviews (Van Teijlingen *et al*. 2001).

Following the pilot study during January 2017 a skills audit was carried out on all staff, including TAs, using materials from the MITA programme through the EEF to identify possible areas to develop preparedness and support. Results were analysed and an action plan for specific professional development days for staff were put in place. The audit was conducted to establish what specific interventions individuals were trained for and those who wished to receive more training in the future; the audit also identified key areas of strength. Systematic reviews and a wealth of research pertaining to the deployment of TAs were accessed, as the school SLT saw the merits of having staff delivering targeted interventions that they have been specifically trained for (Alborz *et al*. 2009; Blatchford *et al*. 2006; 2009a; 2009d; Rubie-Davies *et al. 2010*).

When paid liaison time was introduced across school it followed evidence-based research, which concluded that more planning and liaison time was needed between teachers and TAs (Wilson, Schlapp and Davidson, 2003). A smaller study by Bedford *et al*. (2008) identified that 45% of teachers and TAs did not have provision to plan together and that TAs were reporting spending considerable time each week altering and adapting teacher's planning (Attwood and Bland, 2012). This was not an effective deployment of TAs and it was something the SLT wanted to change. Effective deployment would include: liaison time, clear lesson/session planning with appropriate time allowed for resources to be collected and roles of staff identified, it would also include provision for feedback after sessions. The research all pointed to making

changes that would support TAs and teachers working together more effectively to support preparedness through liaison, planning and preparation time.

1.7 Working with an evidence base

This section examines some of the problems and tensions with the growing popularity of evidence-based practice; it looks at where theory comes from, the quality of evidence gathered and how this can impact in practice.

In order to put this into some sort of perspective, firstly, it was important to place the problem of where researchers derive their evidence from. An important understanding about what has gone before could inform future policies. The interface between the two is problematic and complex, individuals do not make sense of the world or gather information in isolation, without other outside or inside experiences influencing the way they may act, think and behave (Coe, 2013). When thinking about the epistemology of teaching as an activity, it is not without its difficulties, within a room of educators, there will be differences in beliefs and opinion. Perhaps one of the difficulties is that it is so many different things to different individuals (Carr, 2006; MacIntyre, 2011; Thomas, 2007).

One definition of evidence-based practice from the glossary of education reform is:

> *'A widely used adjective in education,* ***evidence-based*** *refers to any concept or strategy that is derived from or informed by objective evidence-most commonly, educational research or metrics of school, teacher, and student performance.'*
>
> (Great Schools Partnership, 2013, p.1 accessed 7/3/2016).

According to MacIntyre (2011) theory in education lacks the generation of laws upon which it is based. There has been no formal idea that the practice of education should be based on theory during the 20th Century (Carr, 2006). In an attempt to understand where theory comes from Thomas (2007, p.7-8) believes that theory's pull is psychological, as well as rational. Theory in

education is often not measured against experience in practice, as the natural sciences are, and sometimes, more controversially, theory is implemented without any adequate justification (Thomas, 2007).

Over recent years in England education has moved significantly closer towards a situation where government policy has a micro-management role, with ministers deciding on how changes should be implemented by teachers, which has led to tensions and a further problematizing of education (DfE & DoH, 2014; 2015). Amongst experienced teachers, academics, lecturers and head teachers, there is a common voice emerging that increases the tensions within education. Many educators see the politicising of education as removing the autonomy away from schools, instead being more focussed on external factors sometimes far removed from the day-to-day reality within schools. Some sources of evidence presented may be viewed as not reliable or robust enough to inform the policies governments decide to implement (Ball, 2003; CEM; EEF, 2013; The Sutton Trust, 2013). Had some teaching been based more robustly on theory, government micro-management would not have been able to gain a foothold. To support this idea further, when you implement guidance from the larger scale studies into a school, these broad overarching evidence-based findings, can be very difficult and challenging to implement. As a senior leader in a school the choice is not there, you are asked to follow the guidance, so there is a constant threshold of tension between implementing the guidance and how it presents itself in reality.

This creates for me the idea that education policy is problematic and sometimes lacking coherence, it was important therefore, for me to create a framework for understanding these changes and the possible impact on TAs. Arguably if standards nationally remain static, despite greater numbers of TAs supporting children in a pedagogical role, a synthesis of research within this field would be timely to explore what improvements could be implemented (Coe, 2013; Webster & Blatchford, 2012).

What is presented as evidence-based practice has become more popular, with government as the justification for numerous initiatives implemented in policies (DfE & DoH, 2014; 2015). The EEF, for example, which was commissioned by the Sutton Trust, has, according to Higgins *et al.* (2013) played a significant role in government policy and practice. The EEF toolkit provides information on cost effectiveness, potential gains in terms of additional months gained, retained gains and whether an intervention was worth implementing. It evaluates and revisits many of the approaches to see if the gains were maintained. This particular toolkit was a starting point for the changes school was looking to implement and it led to an audit of skills for future professional development being conducted and number of new fields of enquiry. The data from the skills audits, preparedness and deployment questionnaires was collected on 23th January 2017 as a baseline before the main changes were implemented.

The EEF offers evidence which is focussed on a particular view of what constitutes evidence, along with the Sutton Trust and CEM. This style of evidence is viewed as the gold standard of evidence, because it uses randomised controlled trials to support findings. It is contested by others (Biesta 2010; Boaz *et al.* 2008; Hammersley 2001; Hammersley, 2008) but is increasingly being used more widely to support government policy (DfE & DoH, 2014; 2015).

Some evidence collected through evidence-based practice may threaten to undermine professional judgement, according to Coe, by only repeating what has gone before (2013). One of the challenges here is how do new theories or ideas develop if evidence is only selected from positively viewed research; this could lead to the stifling of new evidence and theories being developed in future (Piggott, *et al.* 2013).

When something is put forward as evidence it does not mean that it is necessarily accurate or true, only that it has been believed (Biesta, 2010). Research from Biesta (2010) and

Hammersley (2001) in this area supports careful consideration about what is being presented and raises obvious questions: how can it be validated? Does it hold truth, how do we know? Where did the evidence come from? In order to answer questions raised from evidence there needs to be careful consideration and cross referencing from other sources to see that it is valid. Research carried out by Gerber *et al.* (2001) reported the need for effective training and development of skills to prepare and enable TAs to have more of an impact on children's academic attainment (Alborz *et al.* 2009; Blatchford *et al.* 2006; 2009a; 2009d; Coe, 2013; Rubie-Davies *et al.* 2010; Webster *et al*. 2011).

Evidence-based practice may be informing government policy but there are a significant number of voices who urge caution within this area of research (Biesta, 2010; Boaz *et al.* 2008; Goldacre, 2016; Hammersley, 2001; Hammersley, 2008; Piggott, *et al*. 2013).

1.8 Aims of this research

Throughout this chapter there has been an emphasis on my wish to support TAs with their professional development, whether in terms of qualifications or acquiring skills to support preparedness. I have always had a strong desire to listen to what the TAs say about their life and work and value their opinions. Possessing a passion for supporting and helping TAs has naturally led to considering education through their lens. As a school leader with responsibility for eleven TAs and four HLTAs I felt that their deployment and, in particular, the preparedness they felt liaison time did not did not give them, needed to be investigated (DfE, 2016).

Through conducting this research the wider macro-policies and frameworks that impact on TAs can be explored through the micro-level of the working environment of TAs in a specific context at a particular point in time.

Within the next chapter the literature review will explore the discourse surrounding TAs, the tensions within the national picture and some of the significant findings from a number of systematic reviews and projects that have looked at aspects relating to TAs.

The EEF's, Closing the Attainment Gap (2017), has compiled an extensive research base since its inception six years ago, and the findings have been published, include, that:

> *'The £5 billion per year asset of teaching assistants can be deployed more effectively. Though previous research had suggested that teaching assistants can have a negative impact on children's learning, EEF trials have shown how, when properly trained and supported, teaching assistants working in structured ways with small groups can boost pupils' progress.'*
>
> (Closing the Attainment Gap, 2017, p.16)
> (Accessed 11.9.2018)

Furthermore, the findings of EEF have also shown that:

> *…'there does not appear to be a direct and straightforward relationship between increased school funding and increased pupil attainment – what matters it how schools can effectively and efficiently use the resources they have (both financial and human for maximum impact).'*
>
> (Closing the Attainment Gap, 2017, p.10)
> (Accessed 11.9.2018)

The following questions were created to frame the research, focussing on eliciting TAs' voices and their perceptions:

Main research question:

'What are Teaching Assistants' views on their preparedness for teaching following implementation of 'evidence-based' changes to their role in school?'

Subsidiary research questions

- What is considered to work well in enabling TAs to feel prepared for the work that they do?
- What are the perceived barriers to TAs' preparedness for the work that they do?
- In what ways can senior managers respond to what is learned to support TAs' preparedness?

Chapter 2

Literature Review – The role of the teaching assistant

The literature review would be identified as a narrative literature review conducted in a systematic way. It tracked the exponential growth of TAs working in school, their role over time and how it has changed. The review then explored the DISS studies, the WPR, the EDTA and MITA studies within the context of TAs evolving roles and responsibilities. TAs' effectiveness was framed within how research has influenced their practice and their professional development. Some of the challenges in transferring the research evidence to the workplace were reviewed, which subsequently led on to exploring the role of TAs. Important issues concerning the power dynamic at play affecting TAs in school were considered along with the voice and perceptions of TAs in research. The literature review then established how it informed this study and the study's relevance.

The literature relating to TAs was a key focus in this search including TAs' perspectives relating to preparedness. The concepts were carefully considered for relevance and links to support searching for literature (see appendix 3, p.222). Studies accessed followed an explicit criteria based on their relevance to the search, the use of any specific keywords used and detailed appraisal of their content. The starting point for the search commenced with what is known about the expediential growth of TAs through following a chronology of significant events. This led to more specific questioning to clarify the search and identify the focus for the categories. Four main categories were identified to explore which included: TAs' preparedness through deployment; TAs' involvement/experiences; perceptions and their perspectives and a portrait of TAs' characteristics commonly found within literature.

This chapter discusses the role of TAs and how their numbers have increased since their integration into the education system under the Labour government proposals from 1997. TA deployment was tracked along with preparedness, training and liaison time to support developing key ideas in the proposed research. This was achieved through examining systematic reviews, empirical studies and policies to develop a clear chronology of events. Through focusing on the preparedness and liaison time of TAs showed what had already been implemented in existing research and what is effective, this supported the rationale behind this proposed study. Most of the literature was drawn from within the United Kingdom from research focussed on TAs in mainstream settings who work with groups in class and undertake interventions with school age children, there are some exceptions where relevance and focus matched the search criteria.

2.1 The role of TAs

The Labour government introduced the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy strategy during 1998 and 1999 which led to increased numbers of TAs, Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 1998; DfES, 1999). There has also been a significant increase in the number of children who have SEN and are educated within mainstream school (DfE & DoH, 2014; 2015). Another reason for increased TA numbers towards the end of the 1990s, was growing concerns about teachers' workload, leading to the (DfES) instigating a review of policy, which led to *Teacher workload*: *a study* (PricewaterhouseCooper, 2001) and a policy for remodelling the workforce (DfES, 2002). TAs and teachers' deployment and roles were scrutinised and TAs were favoured over teachers for a number of reasons in the remodelling policy (DfES, 2002; OfSTED, 2004), including that TAs would enable teachers to undertake planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) activities.

TAs were now being asked to cover classes (DfES, 2002; OfSTED, 2004) and take on a pedagogical role. This included working with children who had additional needs and taking on greater responsibilities such as planning, delivering lessons or interventions for the children in their care (Webster, Russell and Blatchford 2016). Government thinking was to recruit more TAs to carry out identified tasks, which would support teachers, and that TAs would have access to training and development (DfES 2002; 2003). However, despite the increase in numbers, the role was not clearly defined (Attwood and Bland, 2012). Mansaray (2006) argues that TAs in educational policy are constructed as 'peripheral to teaching and learning', additionally, he suggests that their work as TAs is valuable because of their liminality, not in spite of it' (Mansaray, 2006, p.175). In stark contrast to Mansaray's work, findings from Butt and Lance (2005) showed that preconceived ideas about TAs' abilities and hierarchical constraints meant that their full potential was not being reached.

This is borne out in further studies, particularly with reference to planning and liaison time for TAs. Prior to the DISS project, the Class Size and Adult Pupil Ratios (CSPAR) Project 1996-2003 looked at the role of TAs, how they perceived their role and their professional satisfaction, which is of particular interest to this research. This project identified that only 26% of TAs reported planning and feedback time and, although few TAs were dissatisfied with their jobs, there was some dissatisfaction with their roles and deployment in terms of effectiveness (Russell *et al.* 2005).

Another study from Wilson, Schlapp and Davidson, (2003) looked at the deployment of TAs in 96 Scottish schools. The studies carried out in 2000 and 2001 revealed that only one head teacher had altered the timetable to allow for planning and liaison time. The studies also revealed that there was a discrepancy between what teachers and TAs actually believed about the time they spent on specific tasks. Respondents had a:

> … '*belief that much more could be achieved if there was planning time for in-depth discussion and planning together*.'
>
> (Wilson, Schlapp and Davidson, 2003, p.203)

The study concluded that more planning and liaison time was needed between teachers and TAs.

Other smaller scale studies, including Bedford *et al*. (2008), identified that 45% of teachers said TAs should have paid planning and liaison time with teachers. They also identified that TAs' skills and personal attributes would benefit from development to support effective working partnerships between teachers and TAs. The work of Attwood and Bland (2012) seemed to mirror the findings from the DISS projects in terms of role ambiguity for TAs and the experience of a lack of liaison and planning time between TAs and teachers (Alborz *et al.* 2009; Bedford *et al*. 2008; Blatchford *et al.* 2006; 2009d; Butt and Lance, 2009; Coe, 2013; Mackenzie, 2011; Rubie-Davies *et al. 2010;* Webster *et al.* 2011*;* Wilson *et al*. 2007).

There is a growing body of literature that examines the effectiveness and impact of TAs through appropriate training and deployment (Alborz *et al.* 2009; Blatchford *et al.* 2006; 2009d; Butt and Lance, 2009; Coe, 2013; Rubie-Davies *et al. 2010;* Webster*,* Blatchford and Russell, 2012).

A number of research studies and trials were examined and used as an initial starting point for this study including: CEM; TAs roles were also studied through the DISS projects the EEF, the EDTA project, the MITA project, The Sutton Trust and the WPR. It was anticipated this would initiate an inquiry to support preparedness of TAs within school (Alborz *et al*. 2009; Blatchford *et al*. 2006; 2009a; 2009d).

During 2002 the DfES proposed that TAs should have a direct impact on pupil attainment (DfES, 2002). This research explores some of the challenges and opportunities in supporting

TAs' preparedness, liaison time between teachers and TAs to support effective planning and preparation including effective feedback.

2.2 How the DISS Projects gave rise to other substantial reviews

TAs' roles were studied through the DISS projects which offered comprehensive guidance to develop TAs in school (Blatchford *et al*. 2006; 2009a; 2009d). The DISS projects are a meta-analysis from a number of different sources, and, were carried out in a framework that aimed to provide validity and reliability. The projects looked at collecting reliable data relating to the 'deployment' and 'characteristics' of support staff. It also explored the impact of TAs on pupil outcomes. The projects found that TAs had a pedagogical role and were deployed to support small groups who often consisted of lower attaining pupils and those with SEN (Blatchford *et al*. 2006; 2009a; 2009d).

Another key observation highlighted from the TAs' responses in the study showed that a large number of respondents were more concerned about completion of tasks rather than the children's learning taking place behind the tasks. In a sense the respondents were more 'reactive' than 'proactive' (Blatchford *et al.* 2009d). More controversially:

> '*the DISS projects raised serious questions concerning the way TAs are currently deployed in schools, and this is one reason why supported pupils may not make as much progress as expected.'*
>
> (Blatchford *et al.* 2009a, p.9)

The DISS projects supported building up a profile of possible changes which could be implemented or, conversely, some strategies to avoid.

The Effective Deployment of Teaching Assistants (EDTA) was developed to address the findings from the DISS project which linked factors outside the TAs' control to the fundamental

problem that those children who were supported by TAs the most made the least progress (Blatchford, Webster and Russell, 2012). Thus the EDTA project was developed from the WPR and findings from the DISS project, to look at a number of key elements, including: preparedness, deployment and practice (Webster *et al*. 2011). Before the intervention began a staggering:

> *…'82% of school leaders, two-thirds of teachers and three quarters of TAs said that lesson preparation and feedback was less effective.'*
>
> (Blatchford, Webster and Russell, 2012, p.84)

During the year-long EDTA project compelling improvements were noted in schools regarding the preparedness, deployment and practice of staff. Clear and valuable recommendations were offered to schools, later a number of resources for school leaders including: MITA was developed to support schools in implementing strategies deployed in the EDTA project.

Studies by Collins and Simco (2006) and Barkham (2008), which explored the opportunities TAs had to reflect, supported adequate time being offered for planning and evaluating. Similarly, Collins and Simco found that some TAs' felt like '*spare parts*' as their roles were not clearly defined, this also led to confusion as to how they were perceived by parents (2006, p.204-205). The same study also revealed that there was little time for collaboration throughout the school day.

To substantiate what so many research studies and projects have claimed within this literature review is summed up clearly in the work of Russell *et al*. (2005) where they identify that:

> *'… there is an obvious mismatch between the way TAs are deployed and their professional preparation for their most common role-the support of pupils' learning.'*
>
> (Russell *et al*. 2005, p.187)

As the numbers of TAs have steadily increased over the past 17 years, so have the numbers of HLTAs. Earlier attempts at defining the role of TAs have been varied and numerous, for

example, Kerry (2005, p.376) identified '*11 types of dogsbody'*, when exploring the role of TAs, he also noticed the absence of any clear role definition. The term 'dogsbody' arose from the research carried out with TAs; it was how they described their role (Kerry, 2005, p.376). Research from Emira (2011) also cites lack of clarity based on TAs' roles may lead to the low status of their profession. The momentum of the TA debate gained ground through the work of Attwood and Bland (2012) whose research noted that most teachers and TAs did not have provision to plan together and that TAs were reporting spending considerable time each week altering and adapting teacher's planning. HLTAs asserted:

> …'*that there was a lack of clarity about their role and that this was a barrier to them making an effective contribution to the learning.'*
>
> (Attwood and Bland, 2012, p.86)

Secondly, there have been shortcomings in the training and management of TAs, which were raised by Alborz *et al*. (2009) Bedford *et al*. (2008) Wilson *et al*. (2007). A worrying trend was being established that, in spite of numerous large and small scale research studies carried out, the literature pointed to similar problems being identified in deployment and preparedness. Historically, TAs had been deployed to work with SEN within educational settings (Blatchford, Webster and Russell, 2012; Giangreco, Suter and Hurley, 2011; Webster & Blatchford, 2015). A study from Giangreco, Suter and Hurley, (2011) reported that three quarters of children who had some form of identified SEN received instruction from TAs. There are a number of studies that indicate a lack of preparation for TAs who will be asked to carry out a teaching role (Radford *et al*. 2015).

Crucially, TAs were often the designated adult working with children who had a statement, furthermore, they had responsibility for planning or adapting, delivering and teaching those children with a statement of special educational needs. Furthermore, this means that they had a learning difficulty which required additional special educational provision to be put in place for them (DfE & DoH, 2015). A statement is a legally binding document which clearly sets out a

child or your person's special educational needs. It also details the provision they will require and the educational placement they are to attend is named within the statement. Since September 2014 a statement has been replaced by an Education, Health Care Plan (EHCP). Some of the interviews with teachers and TAs highlighted the prescriptive language employed by teaching staff, for example: '*just do this bit and put that bit there*,' with very little understanding of the child and their learning (Webster and Blatchford, 2015, p.10). The work of Lehane (2015) who explored the perceptions of experienced TAs working on the inclusion of secondary pupils reports that within their experiences, many of the TAs had '*little or no sight of the lesson plan*' or that communication with teachers was '*on the hoof*' (Lehane, 2015, p.11).

Another emerging concern was that, despite comprehensive earlier work by Giangreco, *et al*. (2005), there were potential issues of discrimination regarding children with SEN, in that their experiences within education were predominantly of interactions with TAs and not teachers. There appeared to be emerging difficulties for the children, and those assigned to work with them, that those most frequently working with them, namely the TAs, were not prepared or trained to support these children to enhance their experiences and learning. Therefore, it seemed timely for school leaders to rethink the way TAs were deployed and how they were prepared for their roles if inclusion was to be successful (Radford, Blatchford and Webster, 2011; Skidmore, 2004).

The work of Radford *et al*. (2015) actively recommended that TAs and teachers receive training and professional development together to support inclusion and working together in the most effective manner. Another concern raised by Gunter (2007) was, following the deployment changes surrounding TAs, some teachers were spending more time away from classrooms preparing schemes and lessons that TAs would deliver. This meant that the teacher was not directly working with those children for longer periods of time.

The new SEN Code of Practice from 0-25 years came into practice in September 2014 (DfE & DoH, 2015). This altered the provision of SEN, phasing out statements, which were replaced with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). The focus was now supposed to firmly be on the children who have SEN receiving high quality teaching, as anything less would compromise their education (DfE & DoH, 2014; 2015). From previous studies, like the DISS projects and the Making a Statement study (MAST), it is known that those pupils who receive the most support do not make the most academic progress (Blatchford, Webster and Russell, 2012; Webster & Blatchford, 2015). Webster (2014) endorses the need for SEN to be met through quality teaching and good communication with parents to avoid the misconceptions that the number of hours of support will lead to academic attainment and progress. Despite numerous attempts at defining what forms inclusion should take, interpretations by teachers, TAs and school leaders can lead to inclusion being implemented and interpreted in very different ways (Sikes, Lawson and Parker 2007). Farrell *et al*. (2010) suggest that:

> *'TAs can have an impact in raising the academic achievement of specific groups of pupils with learning difficulties provided they are trained and supported in this process.'*
>
> (Farrell *et al.* 2010, p.447)

Glazzard (2011) found that there were attitudinal barriers to inclusion and that there was a range of practices regarding how inclusion was actually performed, with rigidity of teaching style identified as a barrier for some children. Thirdly, there was debate about one-to-one support and the child with SEN being isolated from the other children, creating an over dependency on an individual. The TAs' views here were that the teachers should take responsibility for the teaching and learning of the children in their class, not the TAs (Glazzard, 2011).

Teamwork was seen as a key part of whether inclusion was successful, particularly when working with children who had behavioural difficulties. The standards agenda was also highlighted as a formidable barrier. According to Glazzard, (2011):

> *'There was a strong sense of feeling that the standards agenda prevented practitioners from effectively implementing inclusion. This emerged as the strongest barrier to inclusion and teacher attitudes towards inclusion were also linked to the standards agenda.'*
>
> (Glazzard, 2011 p.29)

The current focus on raising the attainment of children with SEN is problematic and it appears unlikely that the tensions between standards and inclusion will resolve within the current educational agenda. The marketisation of schools has impacted on the inclusion agenda leading to special needs being viewed as problematic in some instances (Glazzard, 2011). Furthermore, current policy views all learners as able, which is very challenging for some children who require additional support (Goodley, 2007). A study from Giangreco, Smith and Pinckney (2006) found that, where responsibility for planning, teaching and learning was placed firmly with teachers, improvements academically and socially were reported. The children, some of whom had severe SEN, suffered no ill consequences and were doing well some three years later. Where students still had one-to-one support the perennial problems of over dependency, isolation and lack of integration with peers still persisted among the students (Giangreco, Smith and Pinckney, 2006). Recent work from Wren (2017) also highlighted the importance of clarity and consistency in the roles that TAs have in supporting children with SEN. Caution must be exercised here as there is evidence to suggest that deeply rooted practices and discourses around SEN are difficult to alter once in motion. This caution relates to the many difficulties with implementing changes within the role of TAs (Barton and Armstrong, 2007).

There are concerns that TAs may experience marginalisation in some form. This issue was explored by O'Brien and Garner (2001), who interviewed TAs about their experiences. Here again the question of training/experience was raised, this time from the voices of TAs. One participant lamented the lack of liaison time, with no hand-over or planning time allocated within the school day; she also felt that she was unsupported. As a practicing SENCO I found it

personally interesting that participants cited the SENCO as lacking in training or being unavailable to offer support where needed.

Work from Wren (2017) exploring the perspectives of TAs suggests that there are some instances where the lines between teacher and TA are becoming more blurred, however, the perennial problem of children spending large amounts of time with TAs still existed within schools (Wren, 2017, p.17).

The New Partnership for Learning (NPfL) was set up in the south-east of England to upskill teachers to work in partnership with TAs. Their research produced a number of inhibitors to change, which included:

> *'The most significant theme identified was resources, with the greatest need being time for liaison and planning. This was mentioned by most of the respondents, who focused in particular on the need to have protected time set aside'*
>
> (Wilson and Bedford, 2008, p.145)

Another worrying trend cited by over half of the respondents was the continuing need for greater equality between TAs and other members of the school workforce in terms of access to resources being made available. Respondents endorsed the need for paid, regular provision for planning and liaison time. Further research on the voices of TAs reinforces this:

> *'To strive for a more effective provision, TAs and their teachers might benefit from being allocated time, within their contract, to discuss planning and other pupil or school related issues'*
>
> (Roffey-Barentsen, 2014, p.29)

Interestingly, TAs described their concerns over the lack of time and opportunity to discuss the children they would be working with teaching staff. This lack of liaison time was described as an obstacle to effective practice and appeared to have '*a detrimental effect on TAs' confidence and feelings of competence*' (Webster and Blatchford, 2015, p.13). Work from Wilson, Schlapp and

Davidson, (2003) also found that there was, on many occasions, little time or opportunity for teachers and TAs to plan their work together. The advice given was supported through the EEF and DISS, both of which confirmed that schools were not making effective use of TAs and that a total review of the way TAs were deployed and prepared was necessary. Crucially, these studies identified that TAs should not be given the responsibility for the education of children with SEN.

Previous studies such as the EDTA project and the DISS made specific recommendations regarding the deployment, preparedness and practice of TAs to support the most effective use of TAs in schools (Blatchford *et al*. 2006; 2007; Webster and Blatchford, 2013; Webster, Blatchford and Russell, 2012). Based upon findings and recommendations from Butt and Lance (2009) offering TAs the opportunity and time for discussion and listening to what they have to say is central to developing professional practice.

2.3 TAs' effectiveness in the classroom

This section focuses on research currently available through the EEF, the DISS studies, WPR, EDTA and the MITA projects relating to TAs and their effectiveness within the classroom and how it has influenced practice (Blatchford *et al.* 2006; 2009a; 2009d; Coe, 2009; 2013; Hall, 2013; EEF). Using previous research into the effectiveness and deployment of TAs enabled the school to look at key findings and develop an action plan in response to what needed to be implemented, in particular the need for designated liaison time between TAs and teachers to support preparedness required further investigation.

Data collected from Blatchford *et al.* (2007) on TAs found that there was little measurable effect on pupil attainment. One key finding was that there should be more focus on the pedagogical

role of TAs in order to support their overall effectiveness as where TAs were trained to carry out specific interventions there appeared to be a more positive impact on the children.

A later study carried out by Blatchford *et al.* (2009a) reported that those individuals who received the greatest level of support within educational establishments made the least academic progress, in contrast with their peers who received less adult support. The link here with practice was noted by staff in my school, who were aware of a need to promote independence and develop skills for problem solving as children moved into upper Key Stage 2. When children move into secondary school, even with an EHCP, they may only receive a twenty minute session a couple of times a day to support them with their learning. In some cases it is less than this (Blatchford *et al. 2*009d). If children are allowed to develop what could be termed learnt helplessness, a pattern of behaviour discovered accidentally in the 1960s by the psychologist Seligman when studying animal learning, they will not make expected progress (Seligman and Maier, 1967). It may also isolate the child from the main classroom and learning experiences of their peers, consequently creating over reliance on TA support and undermining the aims of inclusion (Blatchford *et al.* 2009a).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OfSTED) (2004) stress that those with lower prior attainment or those with SEN frequently made too little progress, despite good teaching to the majority if the class. Indeed, where children were frequently removed from the class it had a negative effect on children's learning (Blatchford *et al.* 2009a). The 'Velcro Model', of assigning TAs specifically to work with one child is now considered outdated for a number of reasons (Gerschel, 2005). This model can promote over-dependency for the child and develop a learned helplessness as a consequence of the adult always being on hand. It can also create an emotional, physical and social dependency that can isolate the child from their peers (Gerschel, 2005; Maher and Vickerman, 2018). With this information aligning

with current thinking within my school there is a single, one-to-one support worker, whose role is to rotate with other groups of children and support them within the class where necessary. This is to avoid over-dependency. We also consider it to be important not to isolate the TAs away from interacting with other children and colleagues and reduce their opportunities for professional development (Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015). Fundamentally, children with SEN should have qualified teachers to support their learning who plan effectively to meet their needs, rather than a less qualified TA (Giangreco, *et al*. 2005).

The DISS projects all found evidence to support a trend in TAs focussing on completion of the task and not on the process of learning taking place (Blatchford *et al*. 2006; 2009a; OfSTED 2004). When questioned about what they have done, or asked about how they arrived at their answer, some children were unable to say what they did or how they formed their conclusion. This is a poor 'proxy' for learning because the child cannot explain what they did (Coe, 2013, p.14). However, it is important to acknowledge that learning gains made at the point of intervention and immediately upon completion may not have any long lasting impact on the child (EEF; Sutton Trust, 2013). A reflective practitioner will inculcate opportunities for children to overlearn and practise skills over a period of time, building upon prior knowledge (Farr, 2012). Without building in opportunities for children to learn in this way their learning may only ever be shallow or surface learning (Hattie, 2012).

People usually learn more when they have to really think about what they are doing, in contrast they don't generally retain what they are simply told (Coe, 2013). In my school there had sometimes been a tendency to 'spoon feed' the children too much, in the belief that it was supporting them, although in reality it was not scaffolding their learning or moving it on but just helping them move from task to task (Webster, Russell and Blatchford, 2016).

There is another interrelated issue here about how much training and experience teachers in school had in working with and deploying adults in their classrooms and a view not only that some had more experience than others but that a lack of training could marginalize TAs, or make them feel '*pulled*' and worried about their lack of preparedness. The feedback from TAs and the debate surrounding teacher training in working with other adults required some thought. If TAs were not supported by the class teachers they worked with it could lead to tensions within their role, this lack of clarity and direction also presented other difficulties. Work by Ebersold frames these tensions clearly:

> *'…assistants left alone, obliged to shape for themselves their function, or placed in a relationship of subordination to the teacher without recognition for their specific skills …'*
>
> (Ebersold, 2003, p.103)

In research from Cockroft and Atkinson (2015) TAs reported that working with supportive teachers improved their effectiveness within their role. They also added that '*observations'* and '*feedback'* also supported their development (p.98).

A need for feedback and communication was identified when TAs were asked about the skills needed for working in partnership with teachers, 95% said that effective teamwork was important and over 50% reported the need for communication skills (Wilson and Bedford, 2008, p.143). This work which was carried out by the National Partnership for Learning to support teachers with professional development on acquiring the skills they would need to work with TAs, following the workforce remodelling agenda, included induction, mentoring, active listening and negotiating working with TAs (Wilson and Bedford, 2008, p.148).

If practitioners are to become accomplished at developing their skills of critical reflection it is important that they understand the difference between critical reflection and reflection. Critical reflection, according to Larrivee (2008), is similar to looking at something from the micro environment and making connections with the macro environment. It involves studying what

happens in your classroom and then reflecting on the wider school, local authority, or national context and then trying to understand the ethical, social and political implications of these connections for your practice. It is challenging and problematic to think this way because the individual is bringing their own experiences and judgements to the situation (Mezirow, 1990).

Understanding the importance of being reflective, through the wide range of theory available the evidence from CEM, the DISS projects, EEF and within school, raised again, for me, the importance of feedback in any construction of co-operative practice. This strategy plays a pivotal role in improving individuals' or whole establishment's practice. Feedback, encouraging meta-cognitive processes and self-regulation strategies, can be implemented in a number of ways (EEF). These strategies are not expensive to implement and can bring a number of benefits, including peer tutoring, peer assisted learning and collaborative learning (EEF; The Sutton Trust).

At the time of the report carried out by Blatchford *et al*. (2006) most teachers did not have allocated feedback time with TAs. The report found that most teachers had no training to support them directing TAs. Surprisingly 40% of teachers were involved in some form of training with TAs and that the training offered could be 'patchy and incidental' (Blatchford *et al*. 2009a; 2009d). The DISS project was the first of such projects to provide data based on how much time TAs supported pupils and teachers, taken from data collected in 2004. Lack of feedback and planning time with teachers were highlighted here as an issue (Blatchford *et al*. 2006).

There is a direct link between findings concluded from Blatchford *et al*. (2006) the DISS projects and Coe (2009); they highlight the need for liaison time between TAs and teachers to have quality planning time before the lesson. This supports subject knowledge being reinforced and expectations for the lesson being shared with TAs. Feedback on pupil progress provides the

opportunity to further develop impact. All of these points discussed affect the preparedness of TAs in their role. These findings are discussed through the professional development of TAs in the following section.

2.4 Professional development of TAs

Historically, there has been lots of research into professional development of teachers, for example: behaviour management, a multitude of special needs courses, assessment, subject knowledge, success criteria, bereavement, leadership, moderation, improving outcomes for disadvantaged children; this is by no means an exhaustive list. Only more recently has there been an increased interest in the professional development of TAs. A substantial number of TAs now work in a pedagogical role and numerous studies have been carried out regarding this (Blatchford *et al.* 2006; 2009a; 2009d; Coe, 2013; EEF; Hall, 2013). These studies stressed the importance of developing skills and subject knowledge to support TAs' pedagogical role. The work of Russell *et al. (*2013) and Blatchford *et al.* (2009a) reported on the need for 'preparedness' of TAs to support them in their increasing role as educators. '*TAs appear most effective where trained and supported to deliver specific interventions to individuals or small groups*' (Alborz *et al.* 2009, p.15). Similar findings were found in research from Webster and Blatchford (2012) for the National College for School Leadership.

Findings from the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG), (2008) reported that there were a number of TAs who lacked the skills and training to deliver what was required and offer adequate support to pupils.

In spite of training the government introduced to raise the professionalism of the workforce through the DfES (2002; 2003) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (Hutchings, *et al*. 2009) and the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED, 2004; OfSTED,

2007) opportunities for TAs' professional development were variable, as was career progression. Findings from Russell *et al*. (2005) found that from 340 participants in their research some 25% still remained untrained. A significant finding from Blatchford *et al*. (2009a) reported that TAs were happy with the day-to-day training that they received but were dissatisfied with the professional development offered. Similarly, work from Cockroft and Atkinson (2015), some TAs were unhappy that, despite requesting that they receive training, had not received any at the schools in which they worked. Their view was that it was '*vital*' to undergo training in order that they could facilitate effective practice (Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015, p.96). Juxtaposed with the previous examples, perceptions relating to Aspects of the School Workforce Remodelling study revealed that 37% of respondents said that they needed more training and development to support them in taking whole classes (Hutchings *et al.* 2009).

Hall (2013) argues that educators should have continual professional development (CPD) which supports practitioners towards professional development with regard to developing their own strategies for raising achievement, in contrast to implementing solutions designed by others outside their setting. This is moving towards a more bespoke form of CPD, it was not looking at a 'best fits' approach but using critical reflection on practice, supported by theory. This supported TAs to develop and change their professional practice (Hall, 2013). This approach was possibly more powerful than first anticipated, as, by relating it to reflective practice, TAs had become more aware of what they were doing, what worked well and what did not work so well. The skills audit carried out in January 2017 also showed how much CPD was being undertaken and where TAs had identified personal strengths and areas to develop.

According to Neaum (2014) knowledge based CPD is where practitioners engage in research, practice and theory, and are offered time to reflect upon their findings. In addition, participants engage in dialogue with others about what they noticed. One finding from this research was

that TAs now possessed a greater depth of knowledge and understanding; in addition they could challenge or support and offer suggestions about their work.

A practical tool accessed from the Link, which my school subscribes to, has been used to support the TAs with improving their practice in school. The school implemented the recommendations for improving the impact of TAs. IMPACT(1) is an acronym for a number of ideas to implement and support TAs in their work (see appendix 4, p.223). The Link also proved useful with a range of online resources to, support school improvement (Chessum, 2015).

2.5. Challenges in transferring research evidence to the workplace

Evaluating research evidence can be problematic due to the large numbers of studies carried out, the quality of the research produced and the relevance of what has been examined. According to Ioannidis (2005) many research findings published are perhaps over-reported and there may be some instances, where positive results are more likely to be published. There may be a perception of a possible improvement, this could be due to the factors examined or the way it was measured, the reality may be that there was little or no real improvement even though it was thought to have been effective; Coe (2013) argues a similar point. Here sometimes there may possibly be issues with reliability that can be unhelpful, for example when someone implements an intervention and later they are asked to evaluate and reflect upon it, some individuals will choose not to report negative effects, which could render their time spent as ineffective. In contrast some appear to choose to report only the positive aspects of the research (Piggott *et al*. 2013; Slavin & Smith, 2009).

Slavin and Smith (2009), propose that where the evaluator has been involved in the development or the delivery of the intervention, there tends to be a trend to report larger effects from the intervention (Slavin & Smith, 2009). This all suggests that the development of 'evidence-based practice' is not a straightforward process. Additionally, while evaluation can

inform us of what works well in one setting or context, it might not be as effective in another setting. Implementation of interventions can be difficult to recreate on a larger scale, because of different variables and the problematic nature of replicating the intervention in alternative contexts, especially in naturalistic settings (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

Throughout the process of examining the literature and within practice this idea has converged to the point of being unable to be ignored. If education is to improve at all we need to think about what and how we can do things differently in future (Coe, 2013). Where we implement something or make a change, every effort must be made to ensure that its impact is evaluated as robustly as possible (Coe, 2013).

2.6 TA identity, role and profile

The need to explore gender, class and other social aspects of identity relating to TAs, their working life and how this informs their perspectives was significant, as many TAs have been marginalized, sometimes ignored and not valued within the education sector (Kerry, 2005; Mansaray, 2006). It was important to me to understand the effects of gender and social inequality on TAs, most of them being women and drawn from the local community.

A report from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (2009) in the UK suggested that 'white working class girls are four times as likely as white middle-class girls to expect to work in childcare' (p.26).

According to Yeates (2005), childcare is a career predominantly for the female, working classes, who are traditionally poorly paid and, have lower levels of qualifications. Childcare has long been linked with low pay, long hours and has long been associated with a 'safe, appropriate, and 'natural' home for working class-women' (Vincent and Braun, 2010, p.212). Work from Vincent and Braun (2013), studied students taking Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications in childcare

during 2009 and of their forty-two participants, thirty-nine were women. Twenty-seven students were white and British. Dependent upon the participant's age they were asked what their partner's or parent's occupations were, the majority fell into working class backgrounds. The students had been identified as having low self-esteem and being potentially vulnerable by their college (Vincent & Braun, 2010). The paper highlights the '*emotional labour*' necessary to this kind of work exhibited through the person showing emotions such as: kindness, assistance, caring. These emotions are described by Hochschild (1979; 1983) as 'feeling rules', which may be brought on by societal rules and norms, or management, or a context where there are expected behaviours in particular situations. The students in the research of Vincent and Braun (2010) found their own education to be not as fulfilling as it could have been, but despite this they enrolled on childcare classes as adults.

Research from Maher and Vickerman (2018) revealed through their transcripts taken from TAs the rationale behind their choices for working in schools, they confirmed that they chose the work because they had young children and did not want to work school holidays or that it fitted around their existing family commitments. Other research from (Cockroft and Atkinson (2015) revealed that some TAs had negative feelings towards the expectation that they would work additional unpaid hours, they also planned in their own time, and had little preparation time in school or training.

There are two barriers to discuss here, the first point identified is that childcare and caring are often perceived as an extension to motherhood and that caring and nurturing are characteristics which are suited to women (Vincent and Braun, 2011). Work from Apesora-Varano (2007) argues that because of their gender there is a prevailing idea in society that childcare does not require any particular skillset and women are suited to it simply because of their gender.

Research from Vincent and Braun (2011) reported that in spite of new government policies and initiatives from both the Labour and coalition government the issues for the workforce remained as …

> '*… working-class women with a low level of qualifications, receiving a low wage, who constitute the majority of the caring workforce has been caught within the grasp of a detailed programme of regulation and improvement designed to ameliorate their deficiencies*'.
>
> (Vincent and Braun, 2011, p.776)

The political and social context that practitioners are now working within means that initiatives to professionalise the workforce introduced across all phases in education, actually serve to silence practitioners and offer them very little redress to government (Osgood, 2006). Women according to Weiler (1988) find that '*it is the internalisation of male hegemony that leads women to devalue their own worth'* (Weiler, 1988, p.89). This demonstrates another barrier that prevails alongside other perceptions to marginalise women working in this sector of the workforce.

Family background along with social status plays a significant role in the decisions women make relating to employment and their preparation to enter the workplace (Damaske, 2011; O'Reilley *et al*. 2015; Steiber, Berghammer and Haas, 2015). Interestingly, when the perceptions of TAs were sought from Cockroft and Atkinson (2015) some said that having their own children meant that this prepared them for working with children, and being more able to empathise with parents.

When exploring the social positioning of adults working with children it is important to recognise the 'emotional labour' that individuals bring to their role, this was highlighted by Goffman (1959) and his work on: *The presentation of self in everyday life*. This work focussed on the emotional costs to individuals as they act out their lives as if engaged in a theatre production. Later, Hochschild (1979; 1983), conducted research into the human cost of 'emotional labour' to the individual and how this could in turn lead to exhaustion. The idea that there is a particular social

norm for how we should behave and act, particularly when working with children often means that individuals put on a happy face, even if this at their own expense. When working class girls enrol on caring courses they are according to Vincent and Braun (2010) led by their own perceptions and those of close family or friends.

Working with young children is often viewed as a low paid profession, with little security and relatively low status (Barkham, 2008), this adds to the debate about why people, in particular women enter the profession. Recent figures accessed through the Office for National Statistics accessed 4/2/2018 showed when exploring the pay gap by profession that female education support assistants made up 85% of the workforce. The women received £11,459 per annum for full-time work in comparison to men who earned £14,827 for the equivalent hours. Female TAs made up 92% of the workforce and although they fared slightly better than education support assistants, there still remained a gender pay gap with full-time women in employment earning £12,071 per annum and males earning £13,882 for the equivalent hours. Lower wages may be partly attributed to part-time work, as the financial sector does inhabit educational policy due to successive government policies. The idea that education policy and reform are now part of the financial sector, and that to some extent are driven by it is a reality according to Ball (2012).

The intention of the Single Status Agreement(1) (see appendix 5, p.224) which was signed in 1997 by local government employers and unions was to address any disparity in pay and conditions of TAs, the agreement was challenged and questions were raised that it: '*may unfairly devalue the work of support staff (who are predominantly female) involved in teaching and learning relative to other occupations on the pay scale*' (Hutchings *et al.* 2009, p.100). This led to the conception of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) introduced by the Labour government as a statutory body to establish pay and conditions of support staff (OfSTED, 2007). The SSSNB was subsequently abolished in 2010 as it did not fit with the

coalition government's plans for greater deregulation of pay and conditions of TAs (School support staff pay body abolished, 2010).

Work from Watson, Bayliss and Pratchett, (2013) reported that TAs were underpaid and undervalued both in the UK and around the world. Further research from Maher and Vickerman (2018) found that some SENCOs when interviewed claimed that TAs were poorly paid and worked with little job security, such as a permanent contract of employment. Further interviewees indicated that some level 3 TAs were not really paid appropriately for their qualifications by people who were in a position of power, who could decide their pay. The expectation that TAs will work after school, or at other points throughout the day or evening also appears to have become expected in some establishments (Barker, 2008; WAMG, 2008). Further to previous points shared by McAnea (BBC.co.uk, 2008) from UNISON, argued that without suitable training, support and appropriate pay TAs were being exploited by the Government. There was also concern voiced that TAs working circumstances could threaten the personalised learning, and resources targeted towards the most disadvantages children (BBC.co.uk, 2008).

In the report titled Aspects of School Workforce Remodelling produced in 2009 there are instances where the TAs have shared their experiences, UNISON reported that in relation to pay TAs:

> *'appear to have accepted the sort of open-ended working time embodied in the school teachers' pay and conditions document, but without having the corresponding status or reward.'*
>
> (UNISON, 2007, p.60)

A paper from Woods, *et al*. (2009) looked at TAs' perspectives from the North-West of England found that while government had supported teachers in reducing their workload; it had caused increased workload and stress for TAs. The same research also found that TAs were taking on

a greater degree of responsibility, without the pay to complement these new responsibilities and that some TAs were dissatisfied with this.

TAs working in maintained schools and academies do not receive holiday pay unlike the teachers they work with and are paid just over 50% of the salary £22,917 of a newly qualified teacher (NQT) in the England and Wales pay scales during 2017-2018. This is significant because the NQTs salary will rise with experience, meeting targets and increased level of responsibility, unlike the TA who will remain on the same pay scale with cost of living wage rises implemented when agreed to by Government (NEU, 2019). The DfE produced a report on the deployment of TAs in 2019 which showed:

> *'Low pay was highlighted by many as a barrier to securing TAs with the level of commitment, skills and qualifications required. It was acknowledged that many TAs go above and beyond their remit for little financial recompense. This low pay was seen among these schools to reflect a lack of value for the role that TAs were performing.'*
>
> (Skipp and Hopwood, 2019, p.42)

Findings from the Skipp and Hopwood, (2019) suggested that the low pay reflects a lack of value in the role that TAs play within education, there has been a call for TAs to be more highly valued, and training should be offered to support effectiveness (Devecchi and Rouse, 2010).

Work from Marx (1976) could support the notion that the role value of TAs is effectively determined by the economic exchange value of labour, in that they are often not paid to undertake liaison time or make additional resources during breaks or after school. This is corroborated from research carried out by Blatchford *et al.* (2009a) that many TAs do not get paid for overtime, liaison time or beyond their contracted hours. It is further stated in work by Hammersley-Fletcher and Lowe (2011) that TAs although happy with their job, they were not happy with their pay. A number of TAs in research from Cockroft and Atkinson (2015) felt that the additional hours they put in was not reflected through their pay, this was also noted earlier by Dixon (2003). Butt and Lance (2005), also concluded that TAs were not paid for liaison time,

which had been identified as central to improving TA deployment in numerous studies. To problematize the issue of pay in another direction, the differential between teachers and TAs was identified as a possible cause for tensions within the professional relationship of both (Parker and Townsend, 2005).

The idea that TAs are drawn from the local area is corroborated by Barkham (2008), although this is a small study the need for the TAs work to fit around their families' needs and they all live or have lived in the catchment area of the school. The TAs in the research were trusted and valued for their work both inside and outside of school hours, in addition parents and grandparents found them empathetic and approachable (Barkham, 2008).

To draw attention to TAs being drawn from the local area, Osgood (2005) indicated that as long as childcare is constructed as a female working class career it will continue to remain so (Osgood, 2005, p.294). Similarly, Vincent and Braun (2010) make the case that people studying Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) consists mainly of working class women. The women may, because of their education and life experiences have fewer employment opportunities from which to choose (Vincent & Braun, 2010).

According to Vogt (2002), the idea of emotional labour when looking after small children is directly linked with nature, ethics and mothering. Many women working with young children according to Moyles (2001), lack the self-confidence, self-esteem, reflection and professional knowledge required to professionalise early years' education. This idea that women feel powerless to compete against men, or that they are too emotional, or not professional enough is also corroborated by Noddings (1993) and Atkinson and Claxton (2000). The relatively low status of TAs was outlined in a study by Hammett and Burton (2005) who investigated the motivation and stress experienced when working as a TA.

Butt and Lance (2009) recommended that work on TA confidence should be introduced to support TAs when they take on more pedagogical roles within schools. They also suggested that confidence was not a characteristic that was developed within a short space of time, therefore, there needed to be a long term plan in place.

Research from Osgood (2006), suggests that current policies are both challenging and exciting and that this offers an opportunity for practitioners to critically reflect on how they are positioned and how they seek to construct their professional identities.

Tucker (2009), states a number of difficulties and dilemmas when considering TAs' identity, in that their role and identities have not been defined through a chronological timeline of developments. Indeed, he states that to view the matter in these terms is too simplistic and does not explain the greater tensions which impact on TAs' roles. TAs' identity is not fixed, and as they interact with others during each stage of the day these influences impact on them and the context within which they work (Apple, 1993).

A study from Leach (2009) worked with TAs who were part-time students studying foundation degrees cited that feeling safe and valued was an important consideration. TAs also confirmed that on some occasions they felt that they were 'used', or their perception was that some teachers regarded them as 'little more than pot washers'. Some also said that they felt more able to have open professional discussions with colleagues as they felt more confident. Although this is welcome news as the change was embraced by leaders who appreciated the psychological contract of people needing to feel that they belong, were safe and valued was, inherent (Leach, 2009). This cannot be said of all schools, so caution would need to be exercised in that only a small proportion of TAs enter into additional training through universities.

If consideration is made to the discourse of powerlessness TAs may not see themselves as valuable enough to speak out as an effect of their habitus (Bourdieu, 1991). These pertinent points supported further investigation of the idea that sometimes TAs perceive themselves as powerlessness.

The following recommendation suggested from McGinn and Oh (2017), should be considered:

> '*We urge scholars studying class-based differences in beliefs and behaviors to incorporate gendered experiences in homes and workplaces into their research, deepening our understanding of the complex interplay between sources of power and status in society*'
>
> (McGinn and Oh, 2017, p.86)

It is important for researchers to acknowledge that they inhabit their unique habitus, as do participants and this will impact on how they perceive the social structures around them. Equally, the researcher's individual habitus will impact on decisions and choices relating to the chosen methodology.

2.7 TAs and power

Previously, a study based on improving learning through the effective planning for TAs' work was carried out by Cremin *et al*. (2005), the schools involved implemented room management, zoning and reflective teamwork as the three main foci for this research. There was a result which was not entirely expected from the reflective teamwork model implemented which:

> *…'appears to have helped to equalize the power relationships between teachers and assistants, as a result the assistants had increased feelings of empowerment and felt more able to contribute their skills and insights to the planning process.'*
>
> (Cremin *et al*. 2005, p.160)

This is significant firstly, because it is a study which almost stands alone, as it is suggesting that the power relationship between teacher and TA is equalized in some way, this has not been reported in any significant number of studies while searching the literature. Another point is,

there has been much debate about TAs being deployed, but not necessarily equally in the way that teachers have been repeatedly asked about their perceptions and views, about many different aspects of their work. Indeed, there has been very little collaborative work with TAs and teachers compared with teachers independently being asked to take part in research. Perhaps, by TAs being included in more research may ameliorate some of the points which are not currently understood and help to minimise the hegemony between teachers and TAs.

The National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) places childcare activities in category 3, which means that workers are skilled but have little or no freedom over their work. Vincent and Braun (2010) make the case that people studying Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is predominantly made-up of working-class women, who because of their experiences have a smaller range of employment opportunities available to them. There are also concerns located around power voiced from TAs through the work of Alexander (2010).

Some of the points raised relating to the profile of TAs within this section has served to demonstrate there are for some feelings of powerlessness and of policies being imposed upon them, over which they have no control or input (Barkham, 2008; Cooke & Lawton, 2008).

2.8 The voice and perceptions of TAs in research

Work from Cockroft and Atkinson (2015) focussed on gathering TAs' perceptions based upon the Wider Pedagogical Role (WPR). With respect to deployment some expressed their concern that they were asked to work with children who had SEN, and were then made accountable for the child's progress, in effect, taking accountability away from the class teacher. Some TAs reported feeling '*ill equipped'* for their role and found themselves '*working on the hock*' (Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015, p.98). TAs reported situations where they felt they needed more specific training to support meeting the needs of the children, particularly those with attention deficit

hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), behaviour management or dyslexia. As with a number of other studies mentioned within this research, a consistent picture of frequently cited difficulties was emerging. That TAs often felt that they found themselves in situations where they felt powerless to change or had little control over.

Cook-Jones (2006) carried out research into perspectives of TAs found that following the Workforce Agreement they felt '*they have little or no say in the changing of their job roles, or in the increasing expectations that the 'school' has of them'* (Cook-Jones, 2006, p.10). Evidence offered from the Aspects of School Workforce Remodelling found that two fifths of TAs' felt more stressed since the workforce remodelling came into operation, this was particularly prevalent in those who held HTLA status (Hutchings *et al*. 2009).

Perspectives elicited from TAs by Mackenzie (2011) revealed policy in educational establishments sometimes impacted on TAs in personal, subjective and emotional ways, which led to them feeling marginalised (Mackenzie, 2011, p.70). Evidence from the National Assembly for Wales (2009) looked at workforce remodelling found that in a notable number of schools where:

> *…'classroom assistants had been treated like second class citizens on issues such as pay and conditions and access to training and development.'*
>
> (National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Learning Committee, 2009, p.6)

Research from Cockroft and Atkinson (2015) showed a number of TAs' felt that they were not sufficiently acknowledged or recognised for what they do. They also felt that they should not be accountable for the progress and attainment of children they were working with, as this was the teachers job (Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015, p.97-98). TAs expressed concerns during the research from Cockroft and Atkinson (2015), that they were asked to support children with SEN,

and that they did not feel that they had been trained specifically to support the child as effectively as they would like.

From the literature reviewed there are a number of lines of enquiry which would benefit from further investigation including, TAs' perspectives on preparedness and liaison time. How does preparedness and liaison time fit into their daily work schedule, how frequently does it occur in school time and are TAs paid for their time? Is planning time offered and do TAs have the opportunity to plan with other teachers or HLTAs? Are opinions and experiences sought in terms of planning provision for meeting children's needs in class?

The following table shows key recommendations to enhance the way teachers and teaching assistants work together as compiled by Wilson and Bedford (2008).

Paid time in school hours for planning and liaison	*50%*
Funded enhanced pay scale for teaching assistants	*15%*
Shared training opportunities	*13%*
More clearly defined roles for teaching assistants	*13%*
Performance management for teaching assistants	*10%*
Better communication to work as partners	*10%*
Cultural change in school to value the role of teaching assistants	*8%*
Teaching assistants should retain current role	*4%*

Table 2. (Wilson and Bedford, 2008, p.146)

Further reading of TAs' responses from the interviews identified colleagues and sometimes the head teacher as the main barrier to change (Wilson and Bedford, 2008).

Butt and Lance (2009) recommend that some of the issues regarding the overworked role of the TA should be investigated further, as they saw similar difficulties emerging in the future. Therefore, the workforce remodelling which took place to reduce the workload of teachers, may in practice simply transfer issues of retention and overwork to TAs (Dixon, 2003).

The interviews will support establishing how TAs in this context perceive their work conditions, and how they view the world through their own experiences. Their opinions will be sought, not to directly impact on attainment, but to establish what can be implemented or improved upon to support TAs and teachers liaising with each other.

2.9 How the literature informs this study

What the literature established was that TAs have received traditionally variable levels of training and there has been limited preparedness for both teachers and TAs, and often insufficient time for liaison (Blatchford, Russell and Webster, 2012).

Within this review, the role of TAs has been explored to establish the context from which to start the study, this was supported by information from the DISS projects and other substantial reviews. TAs effectiveness in the classroom was reviewed along with the professional development of TAs. The difficulties and challenges of transferring research evidence to the workplace was explored, along with TA's identity, role and profile and how power influences their experiences in the workplace. Research on the voice and perceptions of TAs in research was included to form a platform from which to develop this study.

TAs at the research school have liaison time to support preparedness, along with dedicated planning time in which to plan with other HLTAs. Therefore, establishing the perceptions TAs have about preparedness, liaison time and their experiences would be valuable to explore further, as there is a paucity of studies which have explored this in depth within a primary school setting and from the perspective of an insider. There have been studies which have looked at TAs' perspectives which have been valuable in supporting the literature review for example: (Alborz *et al*. 2009; Attwood and Bland, 2012; Bedford, *et al*. 2008; Blatchford *et al.* 2006; 2009a; 2009d; Butt and Lance, 2009; Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015; Coe, 2009; 2013; Collins

and Simco, 2006; Glazzard, 2011; Lehane, 2015; Mackenzie, 2011; Roffey-Barentsen, 2014; Russell, *et al*. 2005; 2013; Webster and Blatchford, 2015; Webster, Blatchford and Russell, 2012; Wilson and Bedford, 2008; Wren, 2017).

In summarising the literature within these studies there was clear identification of the need for effective training and management of TAs. Furthermore, these studies reported how targeted interventions that TAs were specifically trained for were more effective with pupils and enhanced professional development. A number of TAs reported a lack of training and felt that they required more training to prepare them in their role (Alborz *et al*. 2009; Bedford, *et al*. 2008; Blatchford *et al.* 2006; 2009a; 2009d; Butt and Lance, 2009; Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015; Coe, 2009; Russell, *et al.* 2005; 2013; Webster and Blatchford, 2015; Webster, Blatchford and Russell, 2012; Wilson and Bedford, 2008). Cockroft and Atkinson, (2015) reported that TAs who worked with children who had additional needs reported that they felt isolated, which led to reduced opportunities for training, the same study also reported on how observations and feedback was something TAs felt supported their development. This was an interesting point to develop further in the research school and may support the deployment and effective development of TAs. Butt and Lance (2009) supported the opportunity of listening to TAs and offering discussion about what they have to say about their needs as an integral part of professional development. The suggestions gleaned from the literature supported the need to develop professional development across the school for TAs and teachers, and to incorporate discussion, liaison and feedback relating to TAs development.

The perspectives from TAs and findings relating to preparedness, planning and preparation time were also widely recognised as being supported through collaborative working between teachers and TAs, and that many TAs and teachers did not have provision for planning together, that the majority of TAs who received liaison time were not paid for it. That there was little preparation time in schools and this in turn made TAs feel ill equipped and prepared for

their roles. Many TAs reported that there was little, or no feedback with teachers after completed lessons, or sessions. These findings were an opportunity to put into practice planned, paid liaison time to support the preparedness of TAs across school (Alborz *et al*. 2009; Attwood and Bland, 2012; Bedford, *et al*. 2008; Blatchford *et al.* 2006; 2009a; 2009d; Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015; Coe, 2009; 2013; Collins and Simco, 2006; Lehane, 2015; Mackenzie, 2011; Roffey-Barentsen 2014; Russell, *et al*. 2005; 2013; Webster and Blatchford, 2015; Wilson and Bedford, 2008).

Another key point to make from the review was that there appeared to be still a lot of role ambiguity with expectations not being made clear, this sometimes led to TAs reporting that they did not feel prepared for their role (Alborz *et al*. 2009; Attwood and Bland, 2012; Bedford, *et al.* 2008; Blatchford *et al.* 2006; 2009a; 2009d; Collins and Simco, 2006; Mackenzie, 2011; Russell, *et al*. 2005; 2013; Webster and Batchford, 2015; Webster, Blatchford and Russell, 2012; Wren, 2017). This was useful to develop as TAs throughout school could be deployed in more effective ways, with liaison time, planning and preparation time, this may improve their perspectives about their role in school. This was also an opportunity for perspectives relating to confidence levels amongst TAs to be explored, some research called for TAs confidence to be developed to empower and support them in their role, this could be due to overwork, Butt and Lance, (2009) or their perspectives about marginalisation and inequalities between themselves and teachers, Cockroft and Atkinson, (2015) Mackenzie, (2011) Webster and Blatchford, (2015).

The professional development of TAs emerged as significant to this study in that it is suffused with preparedness, the role and profile of TAs. Professional development also impacts on how successfully the research evidence can be implemented throughout school, and how prepared TAs are for their role. Possibly, by TAs being included in more research issues or tensions which are not currently fully understood may help to minimise the hegemony between teachers and TAs. The power dynamic is significant it may support the study in understanding more fully

how power impacts on all aspects of TAs role and how the perceive themselves, their thoughts and actions.

Much is already known about the deployment of TAs through the DISS research and their impact in terms of the way TAs are deployed. There has been substantial input from Cremin *et al*. (2005) who unpicked TAs job roles, their numbers and training to support their increased pedagogical roles. This research aims to find out what it is like to work as a TA, within the research school, to further develop our understanding of TA deployment in line with research led advice.

2.10 The relevance of this study

The literature review showed that early stages of research conducted into TAs were more fragmented, in that they were conducted on a much smaller scale and many were qualitative in nature. This all changed when during 2003-2009 the DfE commissioned the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) projects to research the characteristics of TAs', their deployment and the impact they had. Despite large increases of support staff in schools there were significant variations in what was known about support staff and their roles in school. As such, there was limited information relating to the deployment and impact of support staff in schools. These large scale studies were designed to provide accurate descriptions of the types of support staff in school, this also included their characteristics and deployment in schools and how it changed over time. The studies also looked at the impact or effect of support staff on teaching and learning, their management and how it changed over time (Blatchford *et al*, 2009). The DISS projects were systematic reviews which pulled together multiple aspects surrounding the work and deployment of TAs. They were closely followed by the Wider Pedagogical Role (WPR) and the Effective Deployment of Teaching Assistants (EDTA). Continuing in the theme

of large scale studies the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) provided more guidance and research into TAs, there was a strong focus on quantifying their findings. This was conducted through evaluating the financial cost of each intervention; the evidence strength from which findings were collated and the impact of the intervention in terms of months gained in children's attainment/progress. These large scale studies have supported schools through offering the following recommendations: schools should think about their conditions of employment for TAs, with careful consideration of additional hours worked or duties undertaken. Support for preparedness through planning and feedback with teachers, identifying the pedagogical support TAs require to carry out their role. How to deploy TAs effectively, ensuring that TAs are not routinely supporting lower attaining children. Recommendation was made that teachers should take responsibility for the curriculum and pedagogical planning for the children in their class including children supported by TAs. What was missing from these studies was the voice of TAs, to me this was an important area to research. Once I had implemented the evidence based changes and they were used in a professional context it was important to gain a qualitative understanding of how it worked in my school.

There is a wealth of perspectives elicited from teachers, teacher training and management within schools, but there seems to be a lack of TAs' views (Hancock and Collins, 2005). There is extensive research and investigation around the effectiveness and deployment of TAs (Blatchford *et al*. 2006; 2009a; 2009d). Some studies where TAs' perspectives have been sought include: Cockroft and Atkinson (2015) explored TAs' views and perspectives about their thoughts on barriers to effectiveness. Cook-Jones (2006) and Lehane (2015), researched TAs in secondary education, they gathered TA voices on working with children who had SEN, including, TAs' perspectives regarding working in inclusive education (Mackenzie, 2011). Within the work of Wilson and Bedford (2008) who suggest that the voices of TAs should be listened

to, to establish their perspectives. These studies demonstrate that there is limited work which has been conducted to gather the voices of TAs, and there is a need to investigate this further, as policy and reality are enveloping their everyday experiences and how this affects their lives is central to understanding their lived experiences. The thought of the overwhelming response made by TAs from research carried out from Wilson and Bedford (2008) through the NPfL resonated within, how could the work from this research be ignored? The lack of protected liaison time was confirmed as one of the main inhibitors of change within the study, in addition, other significant points about TAs need to be accepted and treated as full members of the school. This is a combined response from the research:

> *'Respondents wanted to see the provision of regular, planned and paid meeting time for teachers and teaching assistants, as well as specific training programs…'*
>
> (Wilson and Bedford, 2008, p.145)

This literature review showed that there were limited and significantly fewer studies of what TAs actually think, and how they perceive their role within schools compared with teachers. According to Hancock and Collins (2005) the views of TAs are underrepresented in literature. Research on TAs and *their* motivations is still relatively under-represented according to Milner, (2008). This study it therefore, necessary and timely.

As this literature review shows that TAs are directed and deployed where they are considered to be needed the most by teachers and, this will impact on their personal experiences in school. This research seeks to understand these perspectives and to establish any areas that would benefit from further investigation.

This research will endeavour to capture the voices and perceptions of TAs, their preparedness and how they view their role, and their views on dedicated liaison and feedback time with class teachers. Deployment of TAs is directly organised through the SENCO and class teachers, so resources are directed to where they are needed most. An analysis of the research and

literature has established areas which would benefit from further investigation in future. Suggestions as to possible reasons for the views offered by TAs will also be carefully considered.

The central aim of this study is to contribute to understanding:

'What are Teaching Assistants' views on their preparedness for teaching following implementation of 'evidence-based' changes to their role in school?'

Subsidiary research questions

- What is considered to work well in enabling TAs to feel prepared for the work that they do?
- What are the perceived barriers to TAs' preparedness for the work that they do?
- In what ways can senior managers respond to what is learned to support TAs' preparedness?

Chapter 3

Research design, methodology and methods

This research aims to add to the understanding of TAs' voices using a narrative approach through implementing interviews relating to their role and how they perceive liaison time in a mainstream primary school; as shown in the literature review TAs' perspectives in respect of changes implemented based on guidance from the EEF are not widely researched.

The aim of this research is to examine the motivations and concerns of individual, TAs that are part of the routines and difficulties that they encounter in their workplace (Burr, 2003). Consideration will be given to the complex framework of social relations within which these perceptions and experiences are situated. With this in mind, in this chapter there is a justification of the multi-methods chosen to support this research, including a discussion pertaining to why certain methods were selected over others and how they were enacted. The study is qualitative and interpretative in nature as it is exploring the views of TAs through narrative interviews. Ethical implications and considerations of trustworthiness of the research process will also be examined.

3.1 Introduction

The research aims to explore the voices and perceptions of TAs, how they view their role and their perspectives on preparedness, dedicated liaison and feedback time with colleagues. It is acknowledged within the research that TAs are directed and deployed where they are considered to be needed the most by teachers and, as such, this will impact on their personal experiences in school. This research seeks to understand these perspectives and to establish any areas that would benefit from further investigation.

This chapter will detail how the research is aligned with a social constructionist approach and interpretivist paradigm as it supported the aim of qualitative research and interpretative research through exploring and constructing different perspectives. It will show how TAs took part in the interviews along with the multi-methods that were put into operation to ensure that the TAs' voices were represented accurately. The multi-methods included the interview reflective pieces and the journal. This process was carried out as systematically as possible and transcription included a two-way collaboration between interviewer and interviewee. The guidelines produced by Braun and Clarke (2006) were implemented to support the thematic analysis of the data gathered and identify any patterns or themes to be explored further.

This chapter has a number of parts that follow chronologically, starting with the epistemological orientation, then the research design and theoretical basis that lead into the methodology and multi-methods for this research. The final part will trace the audit trail which will aim to show the research activities from the pilot stage through to the research.

- Epistemological Orientation and Paradigm.
- Research design and theoretical basis.
- Methodology and multi-methods selected.
- Data Analysis

3.2 Epistemological orientation and position

My epistemological position is rooted in social constructionism ontology in which knowledge is understood to be co-constructed. This requires working within an interpretivist paradigm, which acknowledges that the understandings constructed have been interpreted by the researcher. This in turn means the researcher's life experiences, age etc. will have some influence on how the data has been interpreted. When selecting research methods, qualitative methods allow for a co-constructed, interpretative understanding of a particular point of interest, in a particular context and point in time, all of which complemented qualitative/interpretative research.

This approach takes into account that as a researcher I don't know how it feels like to be one of the TAs taking part in the research; each person thinks, feels and acts differently - this can depend on the situation or audience or the context (Burr, 2003).

This co-construction of knowledge is therefore central in supporting this research. As Burr (2003, p.9) notes, in a social constructionist approach,

> … '*knowledge is therefore seen not as something that a person has or doesn't have, but as something that people do together*'.

Significantly, this links with the insider/outsider debate because within social-constructionism it is difficult to step outside or distance ones thoughts because the participants and researcher are immersed within it (Burr, 2003). It is also important to acknowledge, as Burr (2003) notes, that both the researcher and participants are trapped within language, when working and co-constructing knowledge as, within the social boundaries of the school, there is a shared school language which those working within this environment understand. Clearly, therefore, this needs to be carefully considered in the research methods when undertaking research in this paradigm.

This research investigates TAs' perspectives on the changes implemented in a particular school following guidance taken from the EEF. In my professional role of DHT at the school I anticipated the introduction of liaison time following the EEF guidance, that TAs and teachers would be implementing the changes and regularly liaising. It was evident in day-to-day school life where implementation was carried out that, conversely, other members of staff seemed not to embrace the idea as openly. The need to understand how the changes were acting upon the working lives of the TAs emerged as an interesting and necessary area to research. Therefore, this research is aligned to a constructionist approach and interpretivist paradigm because it supported the aim of exploring and co-constructing a picture of the different perspectives of the participants, aiding each other's reflection of the situation. This approach allows for rich, dense data to be collected and interpreted (Lather, 2006). It does not claim to be objective or detached

from the research field, but rather it is seeking to form an inside perspective on a particular issue (Smith, 1983).

According to a number of sources (Atkinson, *et al*. 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2014) an interpretivist approach enables an exploration of complex, multidimensional data collected from a range of sources, as it centres on the way individuals make sense of the world and their experiences. As the nature of this paradigm is constructionist and interpretivist, research must also consider: dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability as trustworthiness frameworks which, support rigour in the research (Anney, 2014; Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba, 2007).

This includes a series of important choices about how research design and methodology, complements a constructionist, interpretive paradigm. The positionality of the researcher also needs to be considered in this paradigm. The researcher will have a set of values and perspectives, therefore, researcher positionality will need to be acknowledged and considered carefully due to their influence on the research choices and process. Reflection and reflexivity is, therefore, important when making decisions throughout the research as within this stance, the researcher's values, beliefs, ethics, politics, ethnicity and gender will all cumulatively impact on how the researcher views and interprets the world around them. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2013) it is important that, as an understanding of the data is constructed and interpreted, the position the researcher takes, their prior experiences and how they view the world will greatly influence the research; this can mean it may support the research process or, conversely, hinder it.

Similarly, the research was not conducted in isolation away from the TAs own personal beliefs, hopes, experiences, history and the context in which they work (Lehane, 2015). Within this approach, it is, therefore, acknowledged that this will shape what is constructed and how the

researcher will interpret this phenomena (Carr, 2006; Guba, 1990). Given this, when conducting the research it is vital to acknowledge this in the research design, analysis and interpretation.

The analogy of the bricoleur nature of a constructionist, interpretivist approach to research is useful; the researcher takes on multi-facetted activities and pieces the parts together to interpret the information presented (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). A bricoleur recognises that research is an interactive process in which the researcher brings their own experiences, lens and perspectives to their interpretation of the information presented (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013, p.11).

> *'…a bricoleur is a kind of French handyman, who improvises technical solutions to all manner of minor repairs. In The Savage Mind (1967) Needham and Lévi-Strauss used this image to illustrate the way in which societies combine and recombine different symbols and cultural elements in order to come up with recurring structures. Subsequently bricolage has become a familiar term to describe various processes of structured improvisation'*
>
> (Phillimore, *et al*. 2016, p.7)

This is congruent with my personal epistemological beliefs. I consider that our understandings of the world are constructed within a social space, and that all participants bring a prior understanding and ways of being to this understanding, which becomes part of what is then subsequently constructed together. To maintain coherence in research design, this stance needs to be reflected in the research methodology.

When considering the setting in which the research was carried out, there were inevitably differing perspectives on, and experiences of, the same phenomena and it was important to align my methodology with my epistemological stance.

3.2.1 Qualitative/interpretative research

Qualitative, interpretative research is '*aimed at understanding the meaning of experiences in our everyday lives*' (Anderson and Arsenault 2005, p.121), it asks the question, '*What is this experience like*?' or '*What is the meaning of something?*' (Anderson and Arsenault, 2005, p.122), detailing individual life experiences at a particular point in their lives and develop insights into the perspectives of those individuals (Clark, 2000). In order to try and capture the TAs' experiences I wanted to co-construct their experiences as accurately as possible through the use of narrative interviews as this method aligned with my ontological epistemological perspective:

> *'The main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are story-telling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world.'*
>
> (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p.2)

As I was looking to understand individual's perspectives and experiences in a particular context qualitative research as a framework aligned with my research aims. Within this approach it is important to recognise that in order to be aware of my own pre-conceived assumptions and ideas that I need to be as open as possible to learning about the TAs' experiences (Finlay, 2008). The need to explore and understand participant's experiences and describe what is going on suggests that the iterative nature of an interpretative, qualitative approach using narrative interviews, in which the respondents are given a role in co-constructing the knowledge being arrived at is central to understanding how TAs' perspectives influence their work. This idea is detailed in the work of Hopkins, Regehr and Pratt, who describe:

> *'…the hermeneutic circle, a metaphor for the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between the part and the whole, and between the researcher and the data. In this process the researcher iteratively cycles between people's individual stories/experience, while also reflecting on his or her own emerging understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Movement around the circle repeats as emerging understandings undergo constant revision each time the researcher engages with the data. This cycling stops when the researcher and participants*

> *reach a shared understanding of what the phenomenon is about, while recognizing that even this shared understanding is still tentative.'*
>
> (Hopkins Regehr and Pratt, 2016, p.23)

The idea of coming back to information gathered, reflecting on it and establishing what to do next, along with what still needs to be clarified, supports the process of understanding the social phenomena that the research is exploring.

This idea that we can never really know something for certain is an important one when undertaking research, in this paradigm. Presuppositions should be considered amongst everything undertaken through the research process. Hammersley believes:

> *'It is argued that there are necessarily different, potentially contradictory, interpretations of any phenomenon, and that if we are to choose amongst them we cannot do this on the basis of which one is valid because any judgement about that is determined by our own theoretical presuppositions; presuppositions which cannot themselves be assessed. The implication is that those who do not share these presuppositions will necessarily come to different conclusions.'*
>
> (Hammersley 1995, p.8)

Thus, all aspects of the research process are recognised as a form of interpreted construction through the very nature of the processes involved. It is, therefore, important to keep this idea to the forefront of thinking as with each item actioned there are a number of decisions that will have been made and, as such, there is not one 'correct' way of recording the information (Hammersley, 2010), although some may do less violence to the data than others.

> *'…while we cannot assume that our perception or judgement of what is given is infallible, or that what we perceive is always what exists, neither should we assume that what we see or hear must always be false or that it necessarily amounts to creation out of nothing. We should not do this because there are no good reasons for doing so.'*
>
> (Hammersley, 2010, p.563)

A qualitative, interpretative approach, therefore, requires that throughout the research process careful choices are made in selecting the most appropriate multi-methods through the narrative interviews, reflective pieces and my reflective journal along with language to support

trustworthiness of the co-constructed knowledge. The multi-methods for my research are informed and can be justified within these parameters.

3.3 Research design and theoretical basis

The research is establishing the perspectives of teaching assistants who work in a particular primary school in northern England.

The aim was to explore TAs' perspectives on preparedness for their role in school following evidence-based changes to practice based on the DISS project. To achieve this, it considered vocational habitus as a framework to explain how this forms an integral part of who they are and how they experience life as a TA.

To assist with understanding some of the experiences impacting on TAs' identity the work of Pierre Bourdieu was drawn upon to enable an awareness of how their experiences are framed by the social structures that provide what Bourdieu calls their 'habitus' …'*A structuring structure, which organises practices and the perception of practices*' (Bourdieu, 1984, p.170). Habitus provides the environment for our individual culture, our internal thoughts, habits, interests, the way we see the world and how we are socialised within it in terms of family and wider culture. It is created through primary socialisation, it is not fixed but fluid in that it can be changed, following, for example, parenthood, experience, age or education (Hawthorn, 2013). Therefore, no two individuals have the same 'habitus' which illustrates how complex exploring perspectives can be, although each habitus is also shaped by the commonly experienced dynamics of the wider social relations largely outside of the individual's control. Central to Bourdieu's idea is that habitus does not determine thought or actions but acts as a social constraint, he claimed that if a person could reflect upon their habitus they will be able to observe social fields with more open-mindedness (Hawthorn, 2013). Two key ideas of Bourdieu's theory are that being

reflexive of ones-self is central to the understanding of social and cultural structures. Secondly, in order to understand social structure it is essential to view participants of research as an intrinsic part of the whole research process rather than simply someone who is taking part (Bourdieu, 1993).

The perceptions of TAs and how they view themselves radiates throughout this research, the researcher elected to incorporate ideas from Bourdieu and the notion of habitus as '*an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted*' (Bourdieu, 1977, p.95). If the physical space that TAs inhabit and how they construct their position within this is structured by influences such as the cultural and, socio economic, there will be forms of hierarchical constraint pertaining to their job role, gender, status that they have to adapt to using the social behaviours they have learnt and practice that can be said to form their habitus. How they work within their work role, will depend on their perceptions of this reality and the fit between their habitus and the social field of the workplace; that is the interaction of different structuring and structured structures (Woolhouse, Dunne and Goddard, 2009).

The marginalization and inequalities of TAs (Atkinson and Claxton, 2000; Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015; Goffman, 1959; Hammett and Burton, 2005; Hochschild, 1979; 1983; Mackenzie, 2011; Noddings, 1993) within the educational profession would align with Bourdieu's idea that there are different positions occupied by individuals who have negotiated the space in which they inhabit that reflect and, to a limited extent, act upon, pre-existing hierarchies and inequalities between groups (Bourdieu, 1984).

The 'voice' of TAs elicited is understood to be nested in the following field.

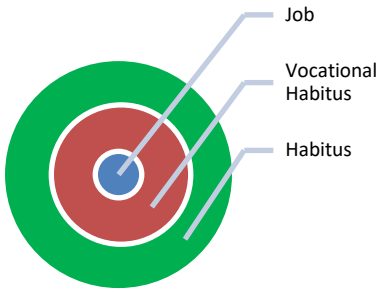


Fig. 1

The constructionist approach to this study recognised that the vocational habitus is, to an extent, constructed by the TAs and how they perceive this can enable an insight into what they see as the space for movement within the workplace field, that is the degree to which it reinforces or relaxes the constrictions of their own habitus and the resulting emancipatory or confining potential there may be in some elements of their workplace. It was also recognised that the TAs will bring their own understanding of it and, as a researcher there was a need to explore the construction of the TAs' habitus. The research had to, therefore, co-construct the social world of the TAs together by enabling critical self-reflection in order to meet this aim.

The methodology of this research was based around eliciting TAs' views about their job in relation to changes made. The central aspect to this research was the job or role of the TA; this was inextricably linked to their vocational habitus which is constructed from the enacting of skills and dispositions that the TAs possess due to their life experiences within the field of the workplace (Bourdieu, 1993). It was anticipated that understanding of the vocational habitus of the TAs would arise within the analysis process of the research.

Research methods were carefully considered in light of the power dynamic between researcher and TAs within the workplace field. The researcher is a senior manager in the school in which the TAs work, and has a direct managerial role that includes appraisal of TAs. The following considerations informed development of the method.

- The Interviews focus was on the TA 'preparedness'. In line with the DISS projects the focus of the interviews was on the structural aspects of preparedness incorporated liaison time, planning and preparation time, equally it included how TAs' perceived if they were prepared or not. The power dynamic here needed to be reflected on as the participants would be sharing information about structures and processes that I had put in place.
- Participants were asked to bring 2 documentary artefacts as examples of sessions that they have taught. One when the process of planning and liaison or 'preparedness' worked well. One when the 'preparedness' could have been better. The responses to 'preparedness' would again bring into play a power dynamic which would have to be carefully thought through. TAs would be aware that they are reporting to changes I had put in place.
- The TAs were asked to talk through the two activities/lessons in terms of the ways in which planning and liaison time influenced their preparedness to teach the lesson. As the structures were put in place by the researcher great care would have to be taken to support the TAs with feeling able to share their perspectives. This attention to minimise the power dynamic was intended to support TAs in voicing their perspectives as openly as was possible.

As a researcher who planned, prepared and set out the process of how the interviews were going to proceed there was every need to consider how this would be received by the twelve TAs. It was important that consideration of how the processes and procedures would be followed systematically and the information that would be shared with the TAs before the interviews took place. There was a need to set out in written and verbal form how confidentially would be addressed and how what the participants said would be shared. Here the trust that had been built as an insider aimed to support honesty in the responses received from the TAs. Explanation and suggestions were offered where the TAs may have shared something

potentially contentious; so that they were clear that, unless they wanted me to act upon it, I would not do so. It was reiterated that they had every right to report their difficulty to the Head Teacher directly rather than it be reported from the research data gathered. This empowered a number of individuals to act on what they had shared during the interviews. The power dynamic was reduced significantly enough for the TAs to say what they did and then act on it and their actions resulted in their difficulty being resolved and led to what they considered to be a better working environment than they had previously experienced in a number of instances.

Consideration has to be given that a power dynamic can adversely affect the way a narrative is developed through an interview. If the balance is not addressed there may be a tendency for people to dilute or distort their thoughts and feelings and only utter what they perceive the interviewer wants to hear. By facilitating the participants to provide narrative accounts of their experiences in school can help to redress some of the power differential within the research process whilst providing information about the meanings that TAs attach to their experiences (Elliott, 2005).

Due to my formal and informal interactions with the TAs as an insider I was able to reflect on how they presented themselves in front of me. After working alongside these individuals for a number of years there were examples of where I was aware of how they were when they appeared relaxed or anxious. These reflections supported the trustworthiness of the information gathered as they contained information relating to the interpersonal relationships that played out as my perception of the working lives of the TAs. Having worked as a full-time class teacher in this school before I became a DHT I had worked closely, with these staff, in fact, sometimes they were deployed to work with me; one particular TA worked with me for five years and we built up a very close, trusting relationship and supported each other in our work.

3.4 Methodology and multi-methods selected

To ensure coherence between research stance and research design considerations the primary source of data was captured from the semi-structured interviews. A secondary source of data was written reflective pieces completed by the researcher after each interview. A third piece of data was in the form of the documentary artefact the participants brought to the interview. Throughout the process I kept a reflexive journal as a record of the multi-methods selected. The reflective pieces as part of the journal formed a sub-set of the journal and informed the methodological choices made. This multi-method approach from the narrative interviews, reflections and the journal supported greater understanding of the complexities of researching TAs' views, additionally, it allowed me to immerse myself with the data.

3.4.1 Interviews

After careful consideration from a number of possible data collection methods interviews were selected as they aligned with a constructionist and interpretive approach which supported eliciting the views of TAs. According to Turner (2010) … "*interviews provide in-depth information pertaining to participants experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic"* (Turner, 2010, p.754). There are numerous styles of interview which can be refined so that thick and rich data can be collected (Creswell, 2007; Dibley, 2011). One definition of rich description is:

> … "*deep, dense, detailed accounts of problematic experiences…It presents detailed, context emotion and the webs of social relationship that joins persons to one another*."
>
> Denzin (1989a, p.83)

Such an approach would allow me to explore their perspectives fully and relate it to their vocational habitus and how they perceive their roles within school. A useful interpretation is: "*To differentiate between rich and thick data is to think of rich as quality and thick as quantity.*

Thick data is a lot of data; rich data is many-layered, intricate, detailed, nuanced and more" (Turner, 2010, p.754).

By using semi-structured interviews with the opportunity for participants to expand on their answers, the nature of the open ended questions allowed for individual responses from participants (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2003). Semi-structured interviews allows the participants to tell their story from their perspective, which is something which was central to this research (Cohen *et al.* 2010). This practice lent itself to incorporating a reflexive, iterative approach to collect rich and thick data in relation to the research question. Having the schedule organised before the interviews took place enabled the process to run more smoothly and ensured a greater consistency in what was asked. It ensured that all participants were asked the same questions, it also helped to keep the interviews on track.

When considering interviews as a data collection tool I needed to consider that interviewing people who I am in a managerial position over and carry out personal appraisals with could create difficulties (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). As a researcher I had to acknowledge that I cannot fully mitigate the impact, however, there were steps to be taken that could minimise it. Careful thought about where and what time of day would be most suitable for the participants. Sharing information relating to the research and being very clear about their role within that process were important. Allowing the participants a period to reflect on the questions they were going to be asked, it was anticipated, supported their preparedness for the interviews.

Greene (2014) shared some of the benefits and considerations of insider research. Insider researchers possess pre-existing knowledge of the context of the research, that can mean participants are more likely to talk freely with someone who already understands (Bell, 2005). There are potential challenges to insider research, however, for example, the researcher's

perceptions could be perceived by other interested parties as too narrow (Aguilar, 1981). This could be due to the researcher not considering other perspectives or not asking challenging questions, there could be occasions where meaning was not clarified or assumptions made, all of which affect the trustworthiness (Brekhus, 1998). One of the ways to try to minimise this is to talk things through with peers and supervisors to check for a balanced approach. Researchers must be aware of participant's preconceptions to minimise making assumptions, thus affecting trustworthiness (DeLyser, 2001).

Insider research has opportunities that can be exploited and the complexities of the field can be unravelled through an in-depth insider knowledge and understanding, including being able to uncover the specifics of an organisation (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010). Therefore, on balance, I viewed undertaking all the interviews as a positive within the research process. It meant that being in the room while the interviews were taking place and being part of the whole process afforded me a unique perspective from which to draw my thoughts. It also enabled me to ask for clarification when there was any ambiguity present.

A schedule for 1:1 interviews was drawn up to take place throughout May and June 2018 with three HLTAs and nine TAs for an interview with each participant. The interviews had prompts/questions grouped in topics to facilitate keeping the interviews on track so that the necessary information was collected. A checklist was created to assist this process and was shared with the participants.

It was anticipated that, because the TAs were bringing their knowledge and experience to the interviews, that they would be the experts and as such they were asked to talk about their role in particular their 'preparedness'.

I prepared in advance a series of prompt questions/topics to be used, if needed to steer the discussion, to ensure that there was consistency across the interviews. The prompt sheet was shared with the participants at the start of the interview.

The questions asked to each participant are contained within (see appendix 6, p.225)

An audit trail was kept through a research journal, recording the date of the interview, the interview information and, the respondent checks, along with the annotated versions of transcripts. For each interview a detailed reflection was written up following the interview. This additional information took into account my insider knowledge and the wider context within which the TAs live. The reflections had a score section contained within them, with 5 being an interview which has generated 'rich data' and 1 meaning the interview did not glean the necessary information. Both were investigated as to why they generated their respective scores. The reflections captured other information, such as facial expressions, body language, atmosphere and choices made by the participants that would not have been obvious from the audio transcriptions.

The journal/diary was split into two main elements, one being the reflective element, where what went well and 'even-better-if scenarios' were looked at in terms of the structures such as timetabled liaison and planning time implemented in school. The reflexive part of the diary explored my role as a researcher in the research process and it acted as an ongoing narrative analysis of positioning in this and the need to stay in role as a researcher and not as someone finding themselves caught between being a line manager/senior leader and researcher.

The reflective/observation transcripts were typed and prepared immediately after each interview was conducted; they were prepared over the period from 10th May 2018 to 13th June 2018. They were written from a range of information gleaned from the interviews, prior knowledge and

reflective/observations and were developed to support analysis. The reflective/observation transcripts provided another layer of information. These reflections were like a pen portrait and provided information on the choices made by participants including location, time, seating position, which would not be clear from the audio recording alone. The aforementioned choices were added as part of the audit trail as they were part of the measures put in place to address the power dynamic. They also contained insider information such as prior qualifications, training, interests, how long they had worked as a TA, if they were drawn from the local community etc. The reflections/observations also contained non-verbal information that the audio recordings would not be able to show, such as gestures, facial expressions. A Likert scale from 1 to 5 was used to support the trustworthiness of the data from my perspective, with 5 being trustworthy; my judgement was made upon visual as well as auditory observations. The reflections/observations were instrumental in setting the scene for the interviews, along with participant's prior experiences of work within different areas of the school and a record of the year groups, phases and responsibilities that each participant had. All of these things supported putting the participant at ease and collecting data which would not have been gleaned from the audio transcriptions alone. It was agreed that this information would be used to support the data collected but that the reflections would not be published so as to ensure that the participant could not be identified from this information.

3.5 Ethics

An email was sent to share information pertaining to the process which would be followed along with an information sheet which was sent out to each participant. The information sheet showed what the intended research was about, what the data collection method would be and that respondent checks would form part of the interview. It was important to seek informed consent before any interviews took place. Informed consent means:

> *'Informed' consent means that consenting is based on the provision of information to the person from whom consent is sought. There are two main aspects to the providing of information which are paramount. Firstly, that the information has a certain quality to it; secondly, that the information is understood by the person who is being asked to consent. These two factors are the main issues. The format of information and all other considerations are secondary to achieving the end of understanding by the person giving their consent on the basis of information which provides certain essential details about the research.'*
>
> (Teesside University, 2020, p.33)

The information supplied by the researcher will include the following:

- Aims of the research
- What participation in the research will involve
- Why a particular type of person is sought to take part
- Potential benefits of the research
- Potential risks to the participant
- How the participants' data will be used and how participant identities will be protected during the research and in any publications or dissemination of results

(Teesside University, 2020, p.33)

Without seeking informed consent the research would lack trustworthiness as it is necessary that all relevant information is shared with participants prior to giving their consent.

A number of important aspects needed to be considered before commencing any interviewing beyond this basic standard, however, I took advice from Robson (1993, p.33) who highlights various practices that should not be permitted when conducing qualitative research. They include:

- *involving people without their knowledge or consent*
- *coercing them to participate*
- *withholding information about the true nature of the research*
- *deceiving participants in other ways*
- *inducing them to commit acts diminishing their self-esteem*
- *violating rights of self-determination(e.g. in studies seeking to promote individual change)*
- *exposing participants to physical or mental stress*
- *invading their privacy*
- *withholding benefits from some participants (e.g. in comparison groups)*
- *not treating participants fairly, or with consideration, or with respect*

(Robson, 1993, p.33 in Cohen *et al.* 2010, p.62-63)

All documents and participants were anonymised and any information relating to individuals was altered. Confidentiality was important, as the manager of the participants it was important that if they say something to me that they didn't want putting into the research that it would not be added. Similarly if they told me something that was about another member of staff I needed to be very mindful about how this could impact on them and the other member of staff. As such caution and talking it over with my supervisor would be implemented if such an instance occurred. It could be asserted that anonymity within the context of my school may not be possible, so any difficulties would have to be acknowledged and mitigated as far as was possible.

Before any interviews were conducted I ensured that I was ethically compliant by completing the process of getting ethics approval. I followed the BERA (2011) code of practice, I ensured that I had a process for how information would be gathered, stored and what would happen to any transcripts or recordings after the process. The hard copy transcriptions would be stored in a locked filing cabinet, and all electronic copies would be stored on a password protected computer with an encrypted storage device as a backup. Consent and debriefing forms were put in place that enabled participants to give informed consent and allowed them to withdraw from if they so wished at any point. It must be acknowledged that in reality the power dynamic between researcher and TA could mean that they felt awkward or unable to withdrawn themselves from the research. (See appendices 7, 8, 9, p.226-228) All of the following procedural aspects were applied to each interview session to ensure a consistent approach was followed. Consent and debriefing forms were put in place that enabled participants to give informed consent and allowed them to remove themselves if they so wished at any point. I recognise that as an insider there are issues around informed consent due to the power dynamic between myself and the TAs. I had to be reflective and reflexive throughout the process and try to mitigate as many issues as I could.

3.6 Sample

The decision was taken to implement purposeful sampling as it involved identifying and selecting individuals who were especially knowledgeable and experienced within the research area (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). As such, I identified that the TAs within my school would be particularly knowledgeable within the research area because they had been in their role both prior and after the evidence based changes were made. TAs' participation through their work and the changes they had experienced, I anticipated would support the planned narrative interviews. Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research as it supports information rich cases (Patton, 2002). This was particularly important as I would need to make effective use of the limited number of TAs who work within the research school, as they were on site it enabled them to take part in the research if they chose to. Purposeful sampling allowed a rich narrative approach towards the interviews as the participants were encouraged to share their everyday lived experiences, this also linked with the habitus of the TAs and the Bourdieusian approach which runs throughout the research. Twelve TAs were interviewed and went through the whole process, additionally, there were three participants who did not wish to be included, one had been involved in the pilot study, two staff members cited that they felt they did not possess the knowledge necessary to take part and that they felt they lacked the self-confidence to take part. This may or may not have impacted on the sample group. It could be that due to all the other possible participants being involved in the research it may only have a minor impact. The rationale of inviting all participants who were eligible to take part was to establish the perspectives of TAs within this school who were involved in the change to working practices. From an ethical perspective I wanted to include everyone eligible to take part, because they had all been involved in the changes made.

Among the participants there was a wide range of experience. Within the group all worked with small groups on interventions or in class with children requiring some targeted support. One TA is employed on a 1:1 basis however; when appropriate she works with other children within the class where she is based.

The 12 participants all worked as TAs or HLTAs in school and their length of service ranged from 2 years to 13 years in this school. The participants previous academic attainment revealed that here were three people who possessed degrees, and a further four had studied to A' Level standard. All had English, Maths and a science and with O' Level, GCSE or CSE level with a minimum of a grade one or 'C' achieved. All worked on interventions and delivered to small groups or whole classes in the case of HLTAs. Some had specialisms in additional subjects, including PE, SEN including Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and French.

Historically and nationally there is a tendency for TAs being mostly female. All of the participants who took part in this research were female, this also applied to those who did not take part (Bach *et al*. 2006). All of the participants were part of the change process and were expected to implement liaison time as part of their duties. The TAs within this school fitted the national profile of TAs: instead of predominantly women they were all women and all were older than 35 years of age, 75% of TAs had four or more years' experience in their role (Blatchford, Russell and Webster, 2012). A significant exception was that all the TAs had at least qualifications up to GCSE standard with 33.33% achieving A' Levels, 25% achieving a degree as their highest qualification.

Age range in years	20-24	25-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	56-60	61-65
Number of TAs	0	0	0	3	7	1	1	0	

Table 3. Participating TAs age range

Years worked	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13+
Number of TAs	2	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	2	1	1

Table 4. Number of years of service in school

Full-time hours	Part-time hours
9	3

Table 5. Contracted hours

(*Only TAs who took part were included in tables 3, 4, and 5*).

It could be asserted that those who did not take part were as important to the research as those who did, as there would be reasons as to why those participants felt unable to take part and their reasons would be just as valid as their counterparts and may say something interesting about their habitus and its place in the field.

Participant inclusion criteria	Participant exclusion criteria
Must be a HLTA or TA in school	Teaching Staff
Works full or part-time	Other staff and student TAs in school.
Has a teaching commitment either full class or small group	No teaching commitment.
Has experienced before and after the changes were made.	Not employed before the changes were implemented.

Table 6. Participant inclusion / exclusion criteria

3.7 Data collection

The data was collected via semi-structured interviews from twelve participants, three HLTAs and nine TAs along with a reflective transcript for each participant. Additionally, a fieldwork journal was kept which recorded thoughts as events and reflections on the whole process. The importance of being ethically compliant was central to the way the data was collected.

Before commencing the interviews I informed myself of the ethical questions and advice from Cohen *et al*. (2010) on page 382. This was to support being ethically compliant in the way I was

going to conduct the interviews. The interviews were conducted only when I had implemented findings from the pilot study which identified aspects which I needed to be change. The consequences of the pilot allowed for example: offering the participants an opportunity to bring planning or a resource where an input went well and see how this could mitigate some of the power dynamic. I asked participants to choose the time, venue and seating for the interview also with the aim of mitigating the power dynamic. I was also interested to see how sharing the schedule of questions in advance and talking through any points arising supported TAs' preparedness for the planned interviews. The consequences of the pilot meant that because I had implemented changes through the opportunity to bring planning or a resource to mitigate the power dynamic, and through sharing the schedule of questions in advance that I did not include the 3 pilot interviews in the final study. Following this, I then thought through as many possible difficulties and potential problems that I could identify or read about. I recognise that I could not ever claim that I had exhausted every possible scenario but I thought about this over a number of months and it informed my practice.

The participants were encouraged to ask questions about the research including the purpose of the research, and why they had been selected to take part. They were also informed that they had the right to withdraw if they so wished, or if they experienced any difficulties encountered at any point throughout the process what to do in that instance. Advice from Cohen *et al.* (2010) and BERA (2011) was used to ensure that as a researcher to fully comply with informed consent participants needed to have informed freedom of choice. I was aware or participants rights to confidentiality, and this was particularly prominent in light of new legislation regarding the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which was implemented on the 25th May 2018. The first interview was conducted on the 3rd May, the final interview on the 12th June; this was at a time when my workplace was going through a transformation in terms of being fully GDPR compliant. Working as a DHT and SENCO I received training on being GDPR compliant, this

was also useful to cross pollinate this knowledge and understanding into preparing for the interviews in my research.

3.8.1 The interviews

The interviews were informed by findings from the pilot and further discussion with individuals. A pilot study undertaken in May 2016 considered three TAs' perceptions through the use of semi-structured interviews relating to liaison time at the start of implementing it within the areas where they worked. By implementing narrative interviews and facilitating the participants to provide narrative accounts of their experiences in school it was hoped it would redress some of the power differential within the research process whilst providing information about the meanings that TAs attach to their experiences (Elliott, 2005).

The use of thematic analysis was applied to these interviews, which was useful in making decisions on the final structure and focus on the interview schedule (Braun and Clarke, 2006). To sum up, this was a small scale study with nine TAs and three HLTAs who took part, making a total of twelve participants from a possible total of fifteen participants.

This pilot study involved two HLTAs and one TA and was used to highlight any difficulties or aspects that I needed to change, for example offering participants the opportunity to bring planning or a resource where an input went well helped to mitigate some of the power dynamic. Asking participants to choose the time, venue and seating for the interview also supported this. Sharing the schedule of questions in advance and talking through any points arising also supported TAs' preparedness for the planned interviews. I knew that they had a keen interest in the research that I was going to carry out in school. One had recently completed a degree and had gone through the process of interviewing participants so she was very willing to share her experiences with me. Each participant was informed individually of what the research was

about, both in writing and verbally, and, once this criterion was satisfied, they were asked to fill in a pre-prepared sheet giving their informed consent to take part.

Open-ended or semi-structured questions were selected to elicit the most appropriate responses. According to Cohen *et al*. 2010:

> *'Open-ended questions have a number of advantages: they are flexible; they allow the interviewer to probe so that she may go into more depth if she chooses, or to clear up any misunderstandings; …. they encourage cooperation and help establish rapport; and they allow the interviewer to make a truer assessment of what the respondent really believes.'*
>
> (Cohen *et al*. 2010, p.357)

.

The interviews were transcribed and shared with the interviewees and their thoughts and perspectives were gathered at this point to establish if the interviews were a positive experience, or if there was anything further that may need to be implemented (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The data collected from these pilot interviews was added into the final analysis of the data.

Lincoln and Guba (1986) describe member checks as:

> *'The process of continuous, informal testing of information by solidifying reactions of respondents to the investigator's reconstruction of what he or she has been told or otherwise found out and to the constructions offered by other respondents or sources, and a terminal, formal testing of the final care report with a representative sample of stakeholders.'*
>
> (Lincoln and Guba, 1986, p.77)

There was an emphasis that the interviews would, as far as possible, meet the needs of the participants and be carried out during paid school hours. The researcher acknowledged that asking TAs to give up their own time outside paid hours would be at odds with this research and its aims. There were clear findings within the literature pertaining to TAs that demonstrated that they frequently work additional hours for no additional pay.

It was then agreed between the researcher and the head teacher that TAs would be offered cover so that they could attend during their contracted hours of work. Control was passed to the TAs over the room or space used; the time and where they would like to sit.

The information sheet also shared with TAs as was a checklist at the start of the interview, before recording took place, so that they were aware of the questions to keep the interview on track and not to place people at a disadvantage in terms of making them feel powerless or unprepared. In addition, the TAs were encouraged to bring along an artefact or example of some planning to support the questions: '*what went well*' and '*what could be even better'*. The questions related to a time when the TAs had taught and it had gone well and another where the lesson could have gone better. The aim of this was to enable TAs to feel more at ease to feel empowered to tell their story.

Prior to the interview commencing each participant had already chosen the venue; time and date of the interview that best suited them. At the start of each interview the participant was asked where they would like to sit, there were a number of chairs within the room from which to choose. Once seated at the start of each interview a checklist was shared with the participant so that they knew the questions which would be asked to support keeping the interview on track. Only when the participant was sure they wanted to proceed the interview began. The interviews ended with the participant being thanked for their participation in the research and the recording device was turned off (Cohen *et al.* 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013).

3.8.2 Trustworthiness, reliability, positionality and power

In order to support the trustworthiness of the data I implemented respondent checks and kept a clear audit trail, as well as using the research journal to aid being reflexive (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The respondent checks were implemented as soon as the first transcript was ready; the

respondents were asked to go through the interview to check for anything they wanted to change, add or had forgotten to say. This required the respondent to use a coloured pen and annotate onto the hard copy any alterations. An updated second transcript draft was then sent to each respondent for their approval; ten out of twelve respondents were satisfied with the second draft, a further two respondents required a third draft. For data to be trustworthy a rigorous and systematic approach was adopted when conducting the interviews. If the data was to be trustworthy a clear audit trail should be apparent, it should represent the information collected and be easily followed by an outsider. The prolonged contact with the participants along with the respondent checks all supported the trustworthiness of the process. Each decision made, and every change, either large or small required it to be carefully recorded, thus demonstrating a chronology of events, I believe that throughout the cycle of research a reflexive stance is important in order to analyse values, methods, the knowledge collected and the reliability of the data (Bolton, 1999).

> '*Reflexive practice was defined as an action that involves* '*active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads*'
>
> (Dewey, 1933, p.9)

I hoped to mitigate some of the power dynamic by being open with respondents, prior to the interviews I had initially given all participants standard information, but directly before each interview there had been an informal discussion where the participant could ask any questions they wanted answering. I reminded them that they possessed information that I was seeking to collect and that as such they had a degree of control over what they chose to share. Also at this stage the process of respondent checks were discussed so participants were aware that they would have the chance to revisit what they had said, and, if they wished to clarify their responses. If, once TAs received their draft transcript and were unhappy about anything, or felt that they had wished that they had mentioned something they would be encouraged to use a

coloured pen and annotate the changes in their own handwriting. This process would also be important in keeping original documentation to support the audit trail and trustworthiness of the data.

As a researcher I acknowledge that I have a set of values and perspectives, therefore my positionality needed to be acknowledged and considered carefully through my life experiences, gender, status, job role, ethnicity, age, will all potentially influence the research choices and processes that I chose to implement. When conducting research as an insider, methodological and ethical issues which could lead to a threat to objectivity or compromise trustworthiness must be considered as they can create issues (Breen, 2007; Greene, 2014). One definition of insider positionality refers to "*the aspects of an insider researcher's self or identity which is aligned or shared with participants*" (Chavez, 2008, p.475).

In asking the participants to decide upon the discussion of what worked well and where it could have worked better the aim was to empower them to tell their story. Making decisions and choices about what they wished to include or exclude aimed to reduce the power dynamic and enable them to construct their experiences and perceptions in a way that they had more control over. It also gave an opportunity for them to offer their opinions and views, not just relating to the questions designed to keep the interview on track, but their perspectives on other aspects of their work that may otherwise not have been voiced. Using a narrative interview approach was designed to meet the aim of giving TAs a voice about their view of their world of work.

Ethics, genealogy and the relations of power according to Ball (2013) are interlinked:

> *'.. an art of technology of living, a set of practices through which we establish a relationship to ourselves of self-examination and determined artfulness, and through which some possibilities of freedom may be achieved, at least temporarily… This brings into play the deployment of genealogy as a critical*

ontology of ourselves, as a means of confronting our own revocability… There is a simple logic here. If power acts upon us in and through our subjectivity, then that is where our resistance and struggle to be free should be focussed.'

(Ball, 2013, p.125-126)

3.9 Transcribing the interviews

In the first phase of thematic analysis becoming really familiar with the data was important. It was viewed as an insider advantage to be in a position to conduct the interviews in a way that exposed the researcher to the entire research field. This additional 'being in the room' advantage offered a number of interesting aspects that would not have been available if the interviews had not been conducted in person. This gave an extra layer of data that supported the analysis of the interviews through the rich contextual information that was gathered.

Following on from the pilot study each participant was approached in a systematic way, following the interview process. The draft copy was printed out and handed in a sealed envelope to the participant, they were asked to check through it and make any changes in coloured pen. Once this process was completed the participant returned the draft copy in a sealed envelope. Any alterations were implemented, then a copy of the new transcription was made along with a coloured photocopy of the annotated interview. In this way the participant could check their annotated copy against the amended copy. All twelve participants went through the same process. One individual made no changes and a further two went through the process for a second time. This consistency allowed each participant the same opportunities through respondent checks to look over final drafts. The participant had a copy of each transcription to keep along with a debriefing letter at the end of the process to ensure consistency. They were also informed again that if they wished to withdraw their permission to be involved with the research they could do that and the information as to how they went about that was shared again as well.

The importance of decision making when transcribing the interviews to include the silences, pauses, non-word utterances, laughing, gestures made, how the transcriptions should be presented were carefully considered. All of these aspects required the researcher to make and consider each decision (Hammersley, 2010).

As previously mentioned the interviewer was constructing the transcriptions through selecting what to include or exclude in the first instance, such as non-spoken things, furthermore, there was the experiences and knowledge that the researcher brought into the process to make decisions (Hammersley, 2010). All of the steps taken demonstrated that the researcher is not simply copying down the utterances onto a page, there are a number of more complex decisions and organisational processes at play here. To use Hammersley's words:

> *'It is also true that what we transcribe, and to some extent how we transcribe it, reflects substantive assumptions (about human beings and their social institutions) and methodological ones too (about how best to describe and explain social phenomena).'*
>
> (Hammersley, 2010, p.558)

The description captured alongside the transcriptions also required construction by the researcher and decisions about what to include or exclude; all of which actions require personal judgement and interpretation to describe the phenomena (Hammersley, 2010). I looked at it as if I was writing a descriptive narrative and was conscious that the words I selected would affect the overall meaning of the transcription produced.

There were twelve final copies containing as accurate an account as possible of what the participants said or wanted to say. There were a further twelve reflections, one for each interview, which supported important aspects of the interviews that would not be able to be captured by simply taping the interview. The reflections were based on being 'in that moment', they were completed immediately following the interview so that the thoughts and images from it were at the forefront of my thinking. It allowed me to reflect the atmosphere, body language,

pauses, sighs, facial expressions that an audio recording would not show. The reflections also were useful to refer back to as after the event things are not always so clearly remembered. In total there were forty nine documents created from the twelve interviews.

These journal reflections proved to be a powerful means of gauging what the participants were sharing through their facial expressions, body language, the seating choice they made and any gestures used. These field notes, a reflexive journal and observations provided another layer to the data. The reflexive aspect of the journal not only demonstrated the way my inner thoughts emerged, developed and changed, but it also added an additional audit tool and supported the generation of how aspects of the data were linked and supported the construction of themes (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999; Hislop, 2003; Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007). The responses to preparedness, or lack of preparedness, lent themselves to be grouped into themes and sub-themes and, the reflexive journal strengthened supporting how this could be achieved in a logical and coherent narrative.

When transcribing the data there was an advantage to conducting the interviews personally, collecting the data added another opportunity to become familiar with the data, later transcribing the interviews offered an additional second layer of immersion into the data. Furthermore, the respondent checks offered yet still further opportunity to reflect, make notes about personal assumptions and clarify what the researcher was bringing to the research. The interviews were checked and re-checked for accuracy against the sound recordings, the respondent checks also supported participants who became situated as the authors of what they were writing. Respondents included aspects that they felt they had not mentioned during the interview or altered a statement that had not quite matched with what they had intended to say.

This research was inextricably linked with perspectives on preparedness and giving TAs a voice, it would seem therefore, to go against the principles and epistemological stance that underpin this research to have not integrated the respondent checks. One HLTA, who took part in the pilot interviews said words to the effect of: *'I wish I had said* …'. If this research was truly about giving TAs a voice then there needed to be scope for TAs to be allowed to say what they intended, if perhaps it had not come out as they had originally thought, or what struck them, upon further reflection, to be closer to what they strongly felt or believed. Through the reflective journal, after the pilot study and prior to the main interviews, it was important to note this and apply the same protocol to all participants to maintain consistency when it came to conducting respondent checks for the research project. Care was taken between researcher and participant to reduce the likelihood of original meanings being changed; the purpose was to clarify where the participant felt it was ambiguous.

The participants were situated as the experts and asked to talk about two occasions where they had taught a lesson or small group, one where the preparedness had gone well and the other where the preparedness could have been better. Here the participants were the experts in the subject they were talking about, they knew what had happened and it was interesting to see how they articulated their experiences through the interviews.

The original drafts were all stored securely and given a unique identifier number for the source, this also enabled safe keeping of the raw data before it was converted to text. Each interview was numbered from 1 to 12, with the date the interview was conducted, along with a handwritten annotated copy returned by the participant, and the final draft which was approved by the participant as a fair and true record of the interview. Having all original copies supported the research audit trail providing the original, annotated and final documentation, so that anyone

checking that the process was ethically conducted could see any alterations that were made in the handwriting of the participant. The electronic copies all have dates, which are stored on an electronic device, which evidences when the interviews were transcribed and when changes were made. Respondent checks or member checking supports the credibility of the research which, in turn, strengthens the trustworthiness of the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Interviews are a two way process with interaction between the participant and the researcher. When thinking about analysis of the interview the researcher was very aware that, as an insider, they were in possession of a wealth of prior knowledge relating to the situation and participants, which was documented through the reflections made throughout the interview process. This allowed for a deep understanding of how that prior knowledge could potentially alter findings or create bias. Through reading and re-reading of the data there was a sense that being the researcher who carried out the interviews actually added another layer of familiarity with the data through being present in the interview process. Typing up the interview transcriptions and subsequent amended drafts enabled greater immersion in the data before any coding took place. This additional immersion in the data is helpful according to Braun and Clarke (2006). Rigorously following this process allowed for ideas and patterns that may be constructed through familiarization of the data.

There is an obvious need to be honest about personal perspectives, pre-existing thoughts, beliefs and any theories or ideas which are developing (Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007) and here the reflexive journal was valuable to support this process; there was also a requirement to apply the same system or procedure to all the data to support consistency. It is important to clarify here that although the word procedure is used here, it is not meant to distract from the reality that the process is messy and completely interpretative.

The reflective journal supported my thoughts, findings and ideas. It allowed me to plan out what I wanted to achieve and what I would need to do in order to achieve it. Crucially, it allowed me to be reflexive about the process as a whole. As knowledge was being constructed it supported me to look through different lenses and enabled me to develop my own thinking and skills as time went on. By recording methodological decisions and the reasons for them also focusses attention onto how I was changing through the process (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

> *"A researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions"*
>
> (Malterud, 2001, p.483-484)

When developing an audit trail it is important to include all the raw data and documents and any notes including pilot forms, schedules, and information shared with participants, information on process notes including methodological notes and how the design, processes and procedures were decided upon. This also includes notes on trustworthiness that related to credibility, dependability and confirmability and the reflective journal, which includes reflexive notes and thoughts. The audit trail also needs to include data reconstruction and synthesis products, illuminating the construction of themes, sub-themes, findings and interpretations (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

3.10 Process of data analysis

Following transcription and familiarisation with the data the next phase of the process involved generating codes. This stage facilitated the initial production of codes alongside the use of the reflexive journal and revisiting the data. This interaction with the data was very important and allowed the messiness of the data to become more manageable, thus allowing identification of specific characteristics within the data. By interacting with the data important aspects or parts of the text could be labelled, placed with related theme and subsequently develop them into

themes. It is important to note that Braun and Clarke (2018) strongly suggest that themes do not emerge from the data, but that they are generated by the researcher, this also places a great emphasis on the researcher being key to the success of thematic analysis.

In line with Braun and Clarke's procedure (2006) I worked through all the data, giving equal attention to each item; this also supported the prolonged interaction with the subject matter. The text was coded in different themes using a best fit process according to relevance. Some theorists such as King (2004) advocate hierarchical coding, which allows for some codes being more prominent than others, this is not to say that codes or ideas that deviate from the main findings should be neglected and not investigated (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Using the reflexive journal alongside the process also provided a reference for the approach taken throughout the process and, where ideas or codes were revisited, there was a clear audit trail to clarify thinking and reasons for decisions taken. Although this last sentence reads as if there were no issues relating to this stage of the process there was, in reality, quite a number of insignificant errors on the researchers part. This namely being the omission of including individual line numbers for each page within each of the interviews transcribed; not only did this take up a longer than expected period of time, but it was something that, on reflection, should have been considered at the point of transcription. That lesson learnt, it made the coding much easier and, upon reflection within the journal, perhaps the interviews should also have been typed up in Excel rather than using word documents. The omission of considering this before the process of coding meant that all the interviews had to be copied and individual line numbers added when they had already been transcribed.

Once the codes were generated they were analysed to identify any patterns, once a pattern was identified the code was then placed into themes; Braun & Clarke (2006) identify two levels of

themes as semantic and latent. The first being what participants said, or what has been written, within the surface meaning of the data, the second, latent theme, goes deeper into the 'hidden meanings' behind what was actually said (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The Chambers maxi paperback dictionary describes the word latent as: '*hidden, concealed; not visible or apparent; dormant; undeveloped, but capable of development*' (Davidson, Schwarz and Klein, 1993, p.595). According to Braun and Clarke (2006) using latent themes allows for '*examination of the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations*' (p.84). It is important when developing codes that, as a researcher, there is continual reflection on the social values, culture and meanings that form part of the process impacting on both researcher and participant. I was aware that data collected from the interviews had already been interpreted through my personal lens; here the aim was that the respondent checks would mitigate some of this impact. According to Kvale, (1996) during transcription the results are constructed through selected information, consequently the transcripts have already been interpreted by the researcher.

Another way to mitigate this was through the data being collected from a variety of sources, such as the interviews and the reflection/observations, when developing codes. The reflection observations were useful as they gave another layer of information which to determine codes, through their presentation of non-auditory information. There was a need for constant re-evaluation of what was being drawn from the data and if it represented any bias.

Coding produced little things and a label that caught something interesting in the data which can be built upon; they were not fixed and evolved over time. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) they can become bigger and subsequently need to be broken down into smaller more manageable pieces, or they may be refined over time through revisiting the data. The researcher also needs to recognise that often codes are not necessarily independent from each other, they often overlap and have links with other codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

When coding, it was useful to present data in a way that was easy to read. To enable this, the use of colour was applied to each interview along with the line, page and unique interview number. The codes were each recorded on a separate Excel page for ease of reading. Each theme contained 'positive' and 'negative' aspects within the interviews; the process also supported the researcher becoming more closely familiar with the data. This was also useful when thinking about the language used by the women within the research.

Once the codes had been decided upon the process to generate themes from them was applied, as a researcher it was important to ask: What are the important themes within the data that need to be looked at in more depth? There was a need to look for any shared meaning within the data and aspects relating to the research question.

> *'A theme is an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole.'*
>
> (DeSantis and Ugarriza, 2000, p.362)

A number of pieces of code overlapped into two or more themes as the language used by participants contained aspects of each theme. Here the handwritten journal supported focussed thinking; new dates were added where any changes were made along with the use of coloured highlighter pens so that anyone reading the journal could see any changes made. This also supported establishing if items were a main theme or a sub-theme. The reason for the change was written and highlighted along with the date of change. Some part of the journal contained a number of sheets of paper using different coloured ink which contained alterations, these were then stuck in on top of each other as the skills of the researcher developed over time. The resources theme had a sub-theme i.e. "space to carry out the intervention" or "lack of suitable space to plan."

The journal supported my thinking and showed the changes made over time. On one occasion there was a detailed search to look at things that worked well using the adjective 'good.' On reflection this was a very latent way of looking at the data and there were also a number of pieces of code that did not relate to the perspectives' of TAs e.g. "the children had a good knowledge of Rama and Sita." Here the data did not support or warrant a theme based around the adjective 'good.' Equally, there was not really sufficient data to support a separate theme based upon the adjective 'good.'

To use the analogy of Braun and Clark's method of defining themes they liken it to a dandelion seed head where the centre is the theme and the seeds surrounding it are the codes (Braun & Clark, 2018). I developed a thematic analysis diagram as a framework to support my thinking that pictorially showed the themes and sub-themes (Thematic analysis diagram, p100). Care was taken to ensure that the themes were selected, not simply that they were based on the questions asked during the interview but on merit and relatedness to the main research questions (Clarke & Braun, 2012).

Themes were developed that showed there were threads presenting things the TAs had in common with each other; ideas were grouped together as they were closely linked. To establish the accuracy of the data presented within the themes original data was re-examined to ensure that findings were informed by the data and reflected the TAs' voice (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

Another interesting find when organising codes into themes and pieces of meaning was the decisions based around what to include and what should not be included. It was important to apply the same set of criteria to each item so that there were not inconsistencies developing and, where information shared by a participant may be unexpected, to include them and follow up with more thought and detailed investigation relating to each item. One example of where

unexpected information was shared was when a TA's laptop did not have the programmes installed that they needed to undertake their planning, this had the effect of wasting their allocated planning time. The merits of each item had to be reviewed or appraised with a consistent approach, here applying theory from Hammersley (2001; 2003) which supported using a more systematic approach. It was also necessary to read through the notes and reasons for inclusion on another occasion, preferably after a short break or the next day, to see if the same processes would be applied, in the same manner. This being the case, then the information included was reviewed and checked a number of times.

All the time the checks were conducted it was important to remember that the active choices made were being made on the assumptions underpinning how the data was being read. The choices reflect the environment that the researcher is working within and any previous experiences. Referring back to my epistemological position of constructionism means that I am constructing understanding with the TAs about the changes made. At each level of the process decisions are made about what is included/excluded. It needed to be a systematic process, implementing reflection and reflexivity, and returning to the data consistently and carefully, this ensures rigour in the process and, therefore, the trustworthiness of the outcomes.

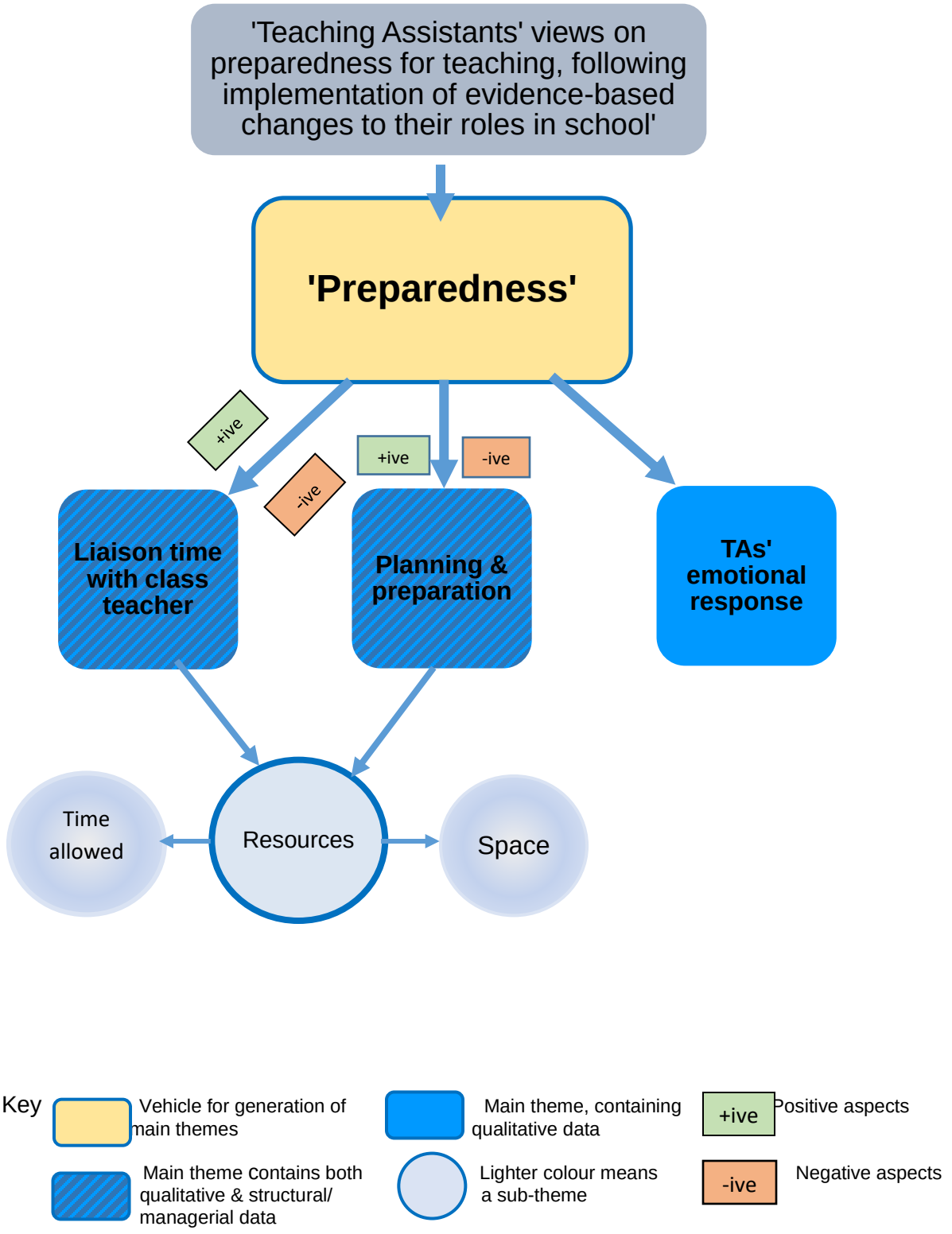


Fig. 2 Thematic Analysis Diagram

After a significant period of checking and rereading, there were three themes identified through the coding process which included: planning and preparation, liaison time and TAs' emotions. Liaison time and planning and preparation time had both qualitative aspects and structural or managerial influences as well. The emotional responses from the interviews were qualitative in nature and it was hoped would support researching the work around women's voices. At first glance the themes of time and liaison time may look similar but the journal showed that they were not similar or particularly related to each other. One theme referred to the time allowed for example to plan, collect resources or conduct interventions; the other was about dedicated liaison time between class teacher and TA. This liaison time was concerned with the preparedness prior to lessons and the feedback process after lessons had finished which is related to discussion and communication. Three sub-themes were identified as; time allowed, space and resources.

Information gathered on aspects that reflect TAs' voice generated by far the greatest amount of data and this part of the research took a considerable amount of time to organise into sections, sub-sections and groups of code. The elicitation of the TAs' voice was a vehicle for the generation of themes. This is the specific area believed to impact on the contribution of knowledge as it contains the reflections on evidence-based changes of all twelve TAs. There were 375 pieces of code extrapolated from the 12 interviews. TA voice became the most significant finding with a number of other interrelated themes supporting it.

All three themes were presented in the format of a table identifying the interview, page number and line number where the information was collected from a further 3 sub-themes were also developed. There were some themes which contained qualitative data such as the TAs'

emotional response, others contained both qualitative and structural/managerial information such as planning and preparation time and liaison time.

A detailed analysis of the themes and how they fitted together within the research process now followed, this narrative was explored in relation to the research question and how this fitted within current theory and practise. This examination of themes was essential to developing the ideas into workable areas to investigate, it was also important to order the themes in a way which communicated what the data actually showed (Nowell, *et al*. 2017).

3.11 Data analysis

3.11.1 Trustworthiness in data analysis

Trustworthiness depends on credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and is established when data closely reflects the meanings described by participants and any use of theory in analysis is clearly explained and argued.

> *'…trustworthiness is not something that just naturally occurs, but instead is the result of 'rigorous scholarship' that includes the use of defined procedures.'*
>
> (Padgett, 1998, p.92)

There are a range of activities that researchers need to engage in to minimise the risks to trustworthiness and they include: prolonged engagement, triangulation, member checking, audit trail, case analysis and reflexivity (Creswell, 2003; 2007; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Padgett, 1998).

If data was to be trustworthy a rigorous and systematic approach should be adopted when conducting qualitative/interpretative research and a clear audit trail should be apparent, should represent the information collected, justify its interpretation and how it was represented in a

systematic way. A relevant method to support trustworthiness of the research process is thematic analysis and, if used appropriately, it enables an audit trail to be evident through a step by step method.

There are a number of advantages to selecting a thematic analysis as an approach. It is a flexible approach, in addition it can offer rich data collection through a systematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Another significant reason for electing to use this method over others was that it is accessible to novice researchers who are at the start of their research careers.

Many theorists see thematic analysis as a method that supports qualitative research and the trustworthiness of the findings if the procedure is rigorous and a clear audit trail is visible (Nowell, *et al*. 2017). Another benefit of choosing thematic analysis is that it does not sit within a certain epistemological or theoretical perspective, which supports it being an adaptable method (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

According to Braun & Clarke (2006), one significant reason is that it is relatively easy and quick to use. Also, when collating large amounts of data it is beneficial to have a structured approach through which the researcher can show their findings in clear way (Nowell, *et al*. 2017). It is also useful for examining perspectives from a range of participants, which is what this research is fundamentally about, and it is also a useful medium for noticing similarities or differences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). When collating large amounts of data it is beneficial to have a structured approach in which the researcher can show their findings in clear way (Nowell, *et al*. 2017).

There are negative aspects of using thematic analysis, one suggestion being that there is not as much literature available examining its efficacy as with some other, longer established, methods; which could be problematic for new researchers. One of the previously cited

advantages of flexibility can prove difficult is that it can lead to a greater chance of inconsistencies when developing the themes from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Building trustworthiness into data analysis requires the researcher to develop a framework that demonstrates the audit trail kept to support the trustworthiness of the qualitative research being conducted (Nowell *et al*. 2017). The research audit trail provides evidence of the decisions and choices made during the research; this includes the theoretical and methodological choices. The reflexive journal is also a way of developing an audit trail, through keeping track and revisiting any themes or patterns and how they interrelate with each other, which also support analysis (Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007). With this in mind records of raw data, field notes and transcripts were kept, alongside a reflexive/reflective journal. The reflexive part of the journal played a central role in decisions made and why certain choices were made, it was useful to synthesize and cross reference data when pulling things together to present findings.

Reflexivity is central to the audit trail and by keeping a self-critical account of the research process has a number of benefits, it organises the thoughts of the researcher, and also provides the evidence of the decisions and choices made throughout the process. Within this journal there are a number of things that should be included according to Nowell *et al*. (2017). By incorporating personal reflections, daily methodological decisions, rationales, personal values, interests and information can support the internal/external dialogue that will have influenced the way in which the data was approached and analysed.

As thematic analysis is an iterative and reflective process, this leads to it evolving over time, this means that it is not linear and there are a number of occasions where something may need to be revisited. Each phase of thematic analysis must address the markers put in place to support trustworthiness (Nowell, *et al*. 2017).

Establishing trustworthiness through data collection needs careful thought about every judgement made, from coding, theming, decontextualizing and re-contextualizing data, where the researcher becomes the vessel for analysis (Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007). Individuals who read this research will need to be able to determine or decide if the process used to collect and analyse the data is credible, therefore clear record keeping was central to the research procedure (Ryan, Coughlan and Cronin, 2007).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed criteria for credibility, viewing it as the link between the respondent's views and the researcher's representation. The following recommendations were used to strengthen the credibility of the data collected, which included: prolonged engagement with the data/research, persistent observation, the triangulation of data and the use of reflexivity through the use of a journal were implemented. The journal contained clear documentation of the research process; it formed a logical sequence which supported the dependability of the research (Nowell, *et al.* 2017).

Peer debriefing was also implemented to check on the research process and there were a number of respondent checks through the process to test my interpretations with participants.

Addressing transferability of the research was important so great care was taken to build a rich description so that others could judge whether it could be implemented in their context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.12 Conclusions from data

Throughout this chapter there has been a developing narrative supporting an inductive approach to this research process. By deploying the use of semi-structured interviews with the participants has enabled the perspectives of TAs to be captured, whilst ensuring that they were given the opportunity to say what it was like in their own experience.

Throughout the reflexive journal and data collection diary were supportive in exploring next steps and keeping an accurate account of the processes involved along with the iterative approach adopted throughout the research process. Using a thematic approach enabled codes to be mapped into themes. The next chapter will present the outcomes from the interviews as key themes.

Chapter 4

Data presentation

This chapter presents the findings from semi-structured interviews, reflections and a reflective journal. Data from the 12 research participants generated three main themes and three sub-themes. All themes and sub-themes were generated from eliciting TAs' views on evidence-based changes implemented. In order to ensure the themes generated were trustworthy careful consideration was given to: the mitigation of power, the methods chosen and reflexivity.

Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes from the TAs' voices through the interviews. TA 1 to TA 12 is used to represent the 12 TAs who took part in the research.

The three main themes which came from eliciting TAs' voices on preparedness were: liaison time with class teacher, planning and preparation and TAs' emotional response. Liaison time with the class teacher and planning and preparation time both have qualitative aspects and structural or managerial threads within them. The preparedness of TAs is an overarching concept within the study which explored 'TAs' views on preparedness for teaching, following implementation of evidence-based changes to their roles in school.'

4.1 TAs' perspectives on preparedness including liaison, planning and preparation

The effectiveness of TAs' deployment depends greatly on their preparedness according to the EEF. A quote from their website states that:

> *'Research which focuses on teaching assistants who provide one to one or small group support shows a stronger positive benefit of between three and five additional months on average. Often support is based on a clearly specified approach which teaching assistants have been trained to deliver.'*
>
> Teaching Assistants Teaching & Learning Toolkit, 2018, p.1 (Accessed 10.3.2019)

The participant's perceptions of preparedness is central to this research's construction of what underpins their ideas of what works and what does not work for them in their everyday role in school.

4.1.2 Perceived benefits of preparedness

The participants were all very clear about the importance of preparedness, they could identify why they thought it went well when it did, and give specific reasons behind their thinking.

TA 1 commented that,

> *'I think it is vital to have that five minute talk to know exactly the previous learning.'*
>
> (Interview 1, p.2, line 6)

TA 2 stated:

> *'I do think it works to discuss the morning or the session before it starts, definitely so that you are not just going into it.'*
>
> (Interview 2, p.4, lines 25-26)

> *'I've got things organised and I take pride in my work and make sure that everything is planned and organised and I have everything that I need with me.'*
>
> (Interview 2, p.4, lines 40-41)

This comment from TA 3 was in response to meeting and talking through the lesson in detail in advance to allow for preparedness:

> *'I do believe that went well but there was a lot of team talking before we did it. Everybody knew what was expected, what the outcome they wanted, and yes, I believe it worked well, really well that day.'*
>
> (Interview 3, p.2, lines 28-30)

Similarly, TA 4 noted,

> '*I just feel more confident going into it you're not going into it blind*.'
>
> (Interview 4, p.2, line 45)

Further comments relate to ways that enabled the TAs to feel prepared:

> *'It really helped me to be prepared when I started working with the groups.'*
>
> (Interview 8, p.1, lines 33-34)

'The teacher would always say right this is what we are focusing on.'

(Interview 9, p.1, line 12)

'When I come in on a morning, usually I get a rundown of what's going to happen that day.'

(Interview 10, p.1, line 11)

The previous quote goes on to mention being more confident in what they are doing as a result of preparation and their reflection suggested that, because the TA and the class teacher had unpicked that the children didn't have very much understanding of a specific maths strand, working together enabled a 'pulling everything together and going back to basics.' Interview 11 said that she felt prepared because she had all the necessary information, had plenty of time and knew what she was doing, so *'it went really, really well*.' This data points to the importance of preparedness, its nature and its benefits. She also liked the opportunity to '*run it by the class teacher' and 'tweak it where necessary.'* All illustrating her need to know that she was doing the right thing and the importance of this to her:

'…or even by them saying, 'yes, that's great, that's just what they need.' Makes you feel a lot better that you're doing absolutely the right thing.'

(Interview 11, page 2, lines 3-4).

TA 10 and 11 also commented on their positive experiences of feeling prepared. In this instance TA 10 had planning in advance and was able to reinforce what had been taught previously by the teacher in her own guided reading session:

'...because I knew they were doing that, then I concentrated on that 'in' the guided reading and we did expression and I sort of felt that I reinforced what had been taught.'

(Interview 10, p.1, lines 22-24)

A response from TA 11 identified her increased confidence through being able to speak to the class teacher in advance:

'It definitely makes you more confident in what you're doing and being able to have time to run it past the class teacher as well.'

(Interview 11, p.2, lines 1-2)

'I contacted the teacher to see what I would be delivering, and we agreed a time that it would be mutually good to meet. I felt that this was really beneficial because I knew that I would be prepared for the lesson.'

(Interview 12, p.1, lines 11-13)

For TAs a vital aspect of feeling prepared is having liaison time with other staff.

4.2 Planning and preparation time

A main theme that emerged from the data was planning and preparation time. In response to having planning and preparation time as mentioned in the quote below from TA8 noted how planning and preparation had enabled her to feel more confident.

'Because I had been given the time to plan, assess and prepare my sessions with the pupils, I was able to teach the sessions confidently.'

(Interview 8, p.1, lines 35-36)

Another response in relation to planning and preparation from TA 9 was:

'I like to prepare things fully, I like to know and be able to feedback.'

(Interview 9, p.4, line 23)

In this instance TA 11 talks about planning, preparation and liaison where teacher and TA were thinking, talking and agreeing in advance:

'I had time to think about this and plan what I was going to do, talk to the actual teacher and see if she agreed that, that was the way forward and it worked really well.'

(Interview 11, p.3, lines 1-2)

Perhaps not surprisingly if there was a lack of planning due to limited time, for example, there were quite emotional responses offered by nearly all the participants.

This example refers to practice before the evidence-based changes were implemented:

> *'We never ever got time to read through the planning.'*
>
> (Interview 1, p.5, line 42)

To place this quote in context TA 1 did receive the teacher's planning in advance, but often on the same day, this meant that there was no time to read it through and collate resources or prepare in advance.

One TA said about their feelings of responsibility for poor outcomes and its link to having adequate planning and preparation time.

> *'I just want to do well, as best as I can. Not just for them, but for me and think well, if it didn't go well, well what can I do; is there something that I could have changed so that it doesn't happen again.'*
>
> (Interview 1, p.4, lines 36-38)

This type of feeling was evident in a number of the participant's responses about when they did not receive planning and preparation time and how a lack of it affected their confidence in their abilities. The literature review suggested that many women working with young children often lack self-confidence and self-esteem (Moyles, 2001). This was observed in this group of the TAs as they shared how they felt when things could have worked better. Their responses were often emotional in tone when they described how they felt on those occasions where they did not receive liaison or planning and preparation time:

> *I just felt like I was spinning all the plates and they were all smashing at the same time.*
> *'It had a massive impact on my confidence, because for the rest of the week I wasn't sure on what I was meant to be doing, which was frustrating.'*
>
> (Interview 8, p.3, lines 16-17)

> *'I floundered, I was just floundering a little bit because I just thought I can't … and also personally I felt like … oh I should know this. If I've been given that, … as if kind of, … go off and do it, it's a failing in me that I don't know how to do this, so that was stressful for me, so I was thinking well I must know how to do this.'*
>
> (Interview 9, p.3, lines 34-36)

'I felt awful, unprepared, I felt stressed. I felt hot. I felt under pressure.'

(Interview 12, p.3, line 14)

The information shared above was complemented by my own reflections written after the interviews. The TAs' words offered an insight into the social positioning of adults working with children and here I reflected on the 'emotional labour' that the TAs were bringing to their role (Goffman, 1959). Their language was very emotive and their tone, expression and intonation reinforced how they felt about their experiences. Some TAs felt overwhelmed and resorted to 'wearing a mask' and 'presenting a happy face.' Here TAs reported that they just got on with it even though they felt a range of negative emotions:

> *'Well it just affects it because you're not ready, and then obviously you don't have the sheet ready or whatever it is that you are going to use for resources. You are still trying to have the lesson and find the resources at the same time.'*

(Interview 6, p.5, lines 3-5)

Here TA 6 was referring to how she carried on, even though she had not had the time to prepare in advance. I noted in my reflections on this interview, how the TA laughed a number of times about the situation she had found herself in, shook her head numerous times and gave good eye contact throughout this discussion. In no way was she complaining, however, as a manager I could see that it was not an ideal situation that she had been placed in. This point is significant in terms of insider research and power relations, the TA may not have laughed and dismissed it in the same way had someone else from outside the school interviewed her. The reflections were useful as the language in itself did not convey the whole meaning in a transparent fashion. This respondent had not had the chance of liaising with the class teacher due to being on playground duty and working in another part of the school prior to the lesson. She confirmed that she just 'got on with it' and did the best she could, as she put it:

> *'I didn't feel prepared at all, um, but you just kick into overdrive and you just think, well what do I need to support the teacher and the children?'*

(Interview 12, p.3, lines 7-8)

4.3 Liaison time and feedback to the class teacher

There were a number of comments about how liaison time benefitted the feedback following a lesson or input. Liaison time refers to the working relationship between TA and class teacher through communication prior to the session and feedback after the session, with the class teacher or student teacher, which involves the exchange of information. From the reflections there were a number of points to note of both positive interactions and of how things did not go so well. An important point to note from TAs' positive and negative feedback is that the class teacher can address it if information is shared between TA and class teacher. Here the power dynamic between teacher and TA can be more equal if the TA was well prepared and knew what to teach and, consequently, did it well. This makes their feedback on learners and the learning taking place more relevant, although the teacher still has to make a judgement about whether or not to act upon it. The judgement made by the teacher will be embedded in layers of complexity about the child, the curriculum, the stage where the child is working at, and external demands. If the teacher did not take the feedback on board this could be received by the TA in a variety of ways; the situation, is, by its very nature, very complex and multi-dimensional.

However, there were a high number of instances where feedback was acted upon and teachers later planned sessions around what had been fed back or planned small group sessions for TAs to work on with the children.

Responses based upon liaison time elicited from TAs included:

> *'I think it helps when you discuss the day about what you are going to do, what you are expecting.'*
>
> (Interview 2, p.4, line 16)

> *'It works very well because I'll always report back during and after the lesson.'*
>
> (Interview 7, p.2, line 1)

> *I do believe that went well but there was a lot of team talking before we did it. Everybody knew what was expected, what the outcome they wanted and yes, I believe it worked well, really well that day.*

(Interview 3, p.2, lines 28-30)

In this example, TA 2 had taken a small group out to work on numbers and she realized that they were not achieving the learning objective. Her feedback was acted upon and she made some resources that were sent home for parents to use to support their child's learning at home.

> *'I did sort of say I was worried about a few of them and where could we go with them and so we suggested sending a few things home and so the class teacher spoke to some of the parents.'*
>
> (Interview 2, p.2, lines 16-17)

There were also opportunities to feed forward in advance of the lesson taking place through liaison and receiving planning in advance, the same respondent noting, for example:

Interviewer: *'What about opportunities to feed forward*?'

TA 2: *'We do, obviously on a Wednesday we get the planning emailed to us so we generally, sort of have a look at it during maybe Wednesday lunchtime, sort of and we will question what we are sort of looking for and what we are wanting to do.'*

(Interview 2, p.4, lines 33-35)

TA 6 had also had the experience of having feedback acted upon:

> *'We'd talk, we would quickly look through the sheets and then we'd say, well maybe so and so might need a bit more work on that...*'
>
> (Interview 6, p.3, lines 21-22)

This respondent had looked at what the children had achieved in the session and decided with the class teacher the next steps to take with the identified children. Similarly feedback from TA 8 was acted upon by a teacher:

> *'It works really well because if a pupil is progressing really well or if a pupil is not progressing as well the feedback allows us to put the pupils into the correct ability group.'*
>
> (Interview 8, p.2, lines 14-16)

> *'We had already identified that they didn't have a very good understanding at all, so it was a case of knowing that we had to go back to basics.'*
>
> (Interview 11, p.1, lines 15-16)

> *'…if I realised that they've not really got that. I would mention to the teacher that I would spend a bit more time on that.'*
>
> (Interview 11, p.2, lines 24-25)

There was a pattern that when liaison time worked well the sessions flowed better and the TAs felt better prepared for their work, some of them even used the term 'confident' to describe their feelings.

There were also a number of instances that indicated that feedback had not been acted upon and that sometimes there were occasions where the TA felt that they would rather not say anything to the class teacher as they felt it would not be acted upon. In this example, the TA revealed that there were issues with the planning, as it was not prepared for the children who were in the class at present.

TA2: *'Sometimes I do think maybe it would be nice if, um, someone actually had a look at any of the things that I do'.*

Interviewer: '*Have a look at your assessment file, and the things that are ongoing that you are compiling a very detailed complex profile of each child*?'

TA 2: *'I mean I do say what I have found and the things but, it's all there and all the work's there, um, and I do think that when we do any observations or assessments that they are put in a file and that's where they stay.'*

Interviewer: How does that make you feel?

TA 2: *'What's the point in doing it to be honest, um, I know that it's not just me that feels like it, because you write it down it stays in the folder, the only one they will ever really look at is the writing and the numeracy apart from that.'*

(Interview 2, p.4, lines 49-50)

In my reflections on this interview I noted:

> *This TAs' comments were corroborated in what she brought to the interview and in my reflections. TA 2 showed me her very detailed assessment folder which contained specifics of every task which was assessed. It was very comprehensive and provided a good evidence base and portfolio from which to draw from which clearly had not been acted upon.*

(Reflection 2, p.2)

> *The reflection showed that there was no doubt that she was telling me things here that she would have been uncomfortable about talking it through with the class teacher that worked with her. I was conscious that she really wanted to tell me about the issues as she felt I was listening and was interested in her opinion.*

(Reflection 2, p.3)

The TA had brought paper documents and files to support what she was sharing with me, which helped her to make her point by demonstrating and showing me what was happening on a day-to-day basis. The planning she brought showed that the learning objective did not match or link to the activities for the session identified. Having the full audit trail supported what she was saying and allowed me to be clearer about what her perceptions of classroom practice were. Here the choice had been made by the teacher not to respond to the TAs' feedback, however, her paper trail supported what she was saying. An interesting point drawn from this discussion is that the TA felt the need for that 'extra verification' which may mirror how she perceived her habitus. It suggests that her life experiences within the field of the workplace were constructed around her perceived position within the hierarchical structures of the workplace and formed how she viewed her role in school (Bourdieu, 1993).

In her interview TA 1 commented that:

> *'I felt like I was going in blind and I didn't feel as well as what I should have done.'*
> (Interview 1, p.3, lines 20-21)

> *'Even though I felt as though I was winging it was good to get the in site from what the children knew.'*
> (Interview 1, p.3, lines 36-37)

The language used is emotive and there was an air of negativity in her comments:

Similarly, TA 3 uses language such as '*dropped a little bit into it*'. This respondent describes how a teacher may know what they want from the session but, without the liaison time, the TA can have no real understanding of the teachers' expectations.

> *'I kind of dropped a little bit in to do it and I felt like the planning was quite limited that I had, but I think that's because the teacher knows what she's doing, it's in her head but it's hard then, because it's not in my head so to speak.'*
> (Interview 3, p.3, lines 39-41)

Journal reflections for interview 3 were also useful here to fully grasp what TA 3 was saying. The lesson was an ICT lesson and the technology was not working as well as it could have; a

number of the computers were not working or would not load up. This information is taken from reflection 3, p.3:

> *'When she fed back the negative feedback to the class teacher she looked a little disappointed that it had not been acted on straight away or in a particularly timely manner, she did say ('Oh this is going to sound horrible this') – I can't do this anymore, I'm not bothered about how it makes me feel but I am bothered about how the children feel.'*

My reflective journal notes that the TA reported that the difficulties she had with the computers had been mentioned three weeks earlier and unfortunately it had not been acted upon. Her body language suggested that she was disappointed and she looked towards the floor on a number of occasions.

> *'She used the term 'I'm more or less at breaking point' before someone reacted to what I was saying. She said 'maybe I shouldn't flounder about in the dark and I should just say something when things are too much or not right.'*

(Reflection 3, p.3)

Other TAs reported similar experiences. TA 5 had been working with a regular group of children in a hand writing intervention session and there had been a lack of liaison between her and the teacher:

> *'And I think that hugely impacts on the children because if you're flustered then they pick up on that and you might not be outwardly flustered but they know that something is awry, don't they, they're not daft.'*

(Interview 5, p.5, lines 15-16)

Journal reflections again supported this understanding:

> *'She genuinely felt terrible the time when she wasn't prepared, and her body language confirmed this, she felt that she didn't want the children to waste their time.'*

(Reflection 5, p.3)

TA 8 also experienced a lack of preparedness because of poor liaison. She had been away from work and upon her return to work she found that the teacher had stopped the intervention that she had been working on. She commented that:

> *'I would have been better prepared if I was given more notice as to what I was expected to do and how to deliver it.'*
>
> (Interview 8, p.3, line 29)

In my journal reflections I noted how authentic this respondent's feelings appeared:

> *'The lack of preparedness example was a very good example, I think it was a trustworthy example as the class teacher is no longer in school and I think TA 8 felt safe giving this as an example. She spoke confidently and was able to talk me though the difficulties she had encountered with her intervention being stopped after she had returned to work.'*
>
> (Reflection 8, p.3)

From my journal I knew that communication had been poor, when TA 8 had returned to school as she was informed by another TA that she would be taking over her intervention group. This had left her feeling very upset about this and I interpreted her hand gestures and the way her shoulders dropped as signs that she was really not happy. I felt as a manager of the school, that it was inappropriate that another TA had been asked to break the news to her and not the class teacher who had made the decision in the first place.

In the reflections I noted that her voice slowed down, and her eyes looked sad. When she approached the class teacher she was asked to do something completely different and was not given any time to put it all together. She said that '*it was really stressful, '**really'** stressful*.' She emphasised this word and she was very clear that the result of this was that her confidence just went like '*that*' and indicated with a hand gesture pointing towards the floor. She said that because she was not sure about what she was doing she felt awful. She shared that the started thinking '*why have I been taken off this other thing that I thought worked, you put somebody else on it, am I not good enough to do that job role?*'

The TA did comment that when she got into it after a couple of weeks it changed again and she felt better about it. As with a number of other TAs she just got on with it and wore a 'mask,' disguising how she really felt. A number of TAs' commented on how they just had to 'get on with it' even though they were not happy with the guidance about what they were being asked to

do, some examples include: TA 3 had got on with it when the computers were not working, TA 11 had been working with student teachers who had not shared any information with her impacting on her preparedness and what she was supposed to be doing in lessons: without being prepared and TA 12 felt like she just had to kick into gear and get on with things.

TA 10 works between two parallel classes and received planning from one and more verbal communication from the other teacher. She conducts a number of specifically targeted interventions and has very limited non-contact time left each day. The TA commented that the two teachers kept on adding more and more interventions to the list without considering the practicality or workload already being undertaken, in the instance discussed below it is a phonics session that TA 10 has been asked to plan and teach.

> *'Really more guidance with what they wanted me to do really.'*
>
> (Interview 10, p.3, line 42)

> *From the reflection on this interview TA 10 was asked to teach a phonics intervention and not given any planning, or what sounds she would be working on. She did say that say that she knew where the children were as she knew where their specific weaknesses are. TA 10 said it makes her 'worry' as she hopes that she is 'doing the right thing for the children.'*
>
> (Reflection 10, p.3)

The worry of doing the right thing and needing to hear it from the teacher was important to TA 12. In this instance TA 12 had not received planning or liaison time prior to the lesson:

> *'I didn't feel prepared at all, um, but you just kick into overdrive and you just think, well what do I need to support the teacher and the children?'*
>
> (Interview 12, p.3, lines 7-8)

Essentially, the participants demonstrated, through verbal and non-verbal communication, that they were not happy about the lack of liaison time and the impact it had on their professional self-image.

This lack of liaison time was described through the interviews as damaging and had a negative effect on how they viewed their own confidence and practice. This reinforces other's findings

noted in the literature review, which revealed that lack of liaison time appeared to have '*a detrimental effect on TAs' confidence and feelings of competence*' (Webster and Blatchford, 2015, p.13).

TA 8 felt that not having planning and preparation time knocked her confidence:

> *'It had a massive impact on my confidence, because for the rest of the week I wasn't sure on what I was meant to be doing, which was frustrating.'*
>
> (Interview 8, p.3, lines 16-17)

Other TAs mentioned feelings of panic and stress and self-doubt:

> *'That's when you start to panic because you don't feel prepared and that's not good for you or the children because you do doubt yourself and you do question.'*
>
> (Interview 1, p.4, lines 7-8)

> *'I'm not even ready and it is, it's the snowball effect, you can't do anything about it, it's just about time and you can't make time unfortunately. It can be stressful, I can, I do find it very stressful some days when I'm literally going from lunchtime, walking straight in through the double doors and the kids are coming the other way.'*
>
> (Interview 6, p.4, lines 17-20)

Another interesting aspect of liaison that became apparent in interview 11 concerned their relationship with student teachers. This TA works between two classes, and both classes at the time of interviewing had a final year teaching student on placement.

> *'It is very rarely I ever get anything from either student, the only time I would ever get something, speaking honestly, is if they were being observed.'*
>
> (Interview 11, p.3, lines 9-10)

> *'That's the only time I would get something, it was once said, 'there's some planning there if you want it.' And that was as the lesson was about to start.'*
>
> (Interview 11, p.3, lines 14-15)

> *'They could have talked to me about (laughs) what the requirement was, what would have been needed.'*
>
> (Interview 11, p.3, lines 43-44)

The student teacher, from the TAs point of view, behaved as though they did not have to liaise with the TA unless there was an observation, although, of course, students need to be aware of the teaching standards as do all qualified teaching staff and, in this particular case, they were not meeting the criteria for standard 8: points 2 and 3.

> Teaching Standard 8: Fulfil wider professional responsibilities
>
> - '*develop effective professional relationships with colleagues, knowing how and when to draw on advice and specialist support*
> - *deploy support staff effectively'*
>
> (DfE, 2011, Teaching Standards, Accessed 10.3.2019)

TA 11 goes on to say:

> *'They didn't feel it was important to share the planning with me, they knew what their expectation was, if they weren't sharing and they should have got the resources for this group.'*
>
> (Interview 11, p.3, lines 40-41)

This impacted on the small group teaching this TA would be required to support during the lesson, indeed there were no resources ready for the whole class which meant the TA going out during the input to prepare for the lesson that had already started:

> *'I was scrabbling round for things because I hadn't had the opportunity to get what I needed together.'*
>
> (Interview 11, p.3, line 34)

The TAs generally appear to firstly respond to other peoples' needs before their own, in this case not wanting to upset the student teacher who was in the class, despite being faced with difficulties because the students were not liaising with her or sharing and planning in advance. This is congruent with their habitus, which supports a stereotypical female-maternal approach where the TAs are trapped within their habitus as they felt unable to say what the difficulties were to the student teachers. This next part of the transcript showed the TA not wanting to address the student teachers lack of liaison/communication:

TA 11: *'There probably isn't any because I don't think I would say.'*

Interviewer: *'What reasons would you have for not saying would you think?'*

TA 11: *'Because I wouldn't want to make them feel … … I don't think it's a conversation I would want to have, I would have that conversation with one of their … What do you call them?'*

Interviewer: *'Tutors?'*

TA 11: *'Yes, I would have the conversation with the tutor for them to feed back, but I wouldn't personally have that conversation with them directly.'*

(Interview 11, p.4, lines 17-23)

From the sequence illustrated above TA 11 was worried about the social relationships with the students who were in school. Even though her working conditions were difficult and she had not been included in liaison time, or received any planning in advance, except for an observation, she was still thinking about other people's' feelings instead of her own needs. In my journal reflections I indicated that this respondent used an animated tone, along with lots of hand gestures to support her facial expressions and she smiled a lot when indicating that she loved her work and wanted to do the best she could. In contrast when she talked about the students her demeanor altered. My reflections following the interview showed that when she said 'O*h there's some planning there if you want it*,' she was talking about how the student had talked to her, she was very dismissive in her tone and brushed her left hand aside as if to signal 'do what you want.' The '*if you want it*' part (which referred to the planning) was also said in a way indicating the student could not have been bothered to talk to TA 11 about it, '*if you want it*!' There was also an emphasis on '***if***' and '***want***' it (Reflection 11, p.3).

The same reflection details that this TAs' demeanour showed how she was unhappy about the situation she found herself in and that it has been frustrating for her as she felt that it had not supported the children as well as it could. She also indicated that there were a number of other directions that she was being pulled in. Although throughout she did not lose her sense of

humour, and laughed quite a bit when she was talking, - I still felt that I understood what she intended to mean (Reflection 11, p.4). The TAs and the students groups appeared to be organised in a particular way that demonstrated hierarchies and inequalities between these groups. Therefore, the TAs have to adapt to using social behaviours they have learnt and their previous experiences that can be said to form their habitus, this places restrictions on how they perceive themselves at work and how they live within it (Woolhouse, Dunne and Goddard, 2009).

On a professional level, I followed this up with the class teachers who were mentors for their students in a tutorial session on teaching standard 8, fulfilling wider professional duties. I mentioned that deployment of staff and professional relationships were important in fulfilling the criteria for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and that modelling and demonstration would develop this skill in these individuals.

4.4 Power dynamic

This section is about TAs' emotional responses following interactions between teachers and TAs where the power dynamic had been particularly noticeable, it highlights the landscape TAs inhabit within their roles and how these elements impact on them. Elements of Bourdieu's theory of habitus were useful to apply to this research as it demonstrates that individuals construct their place within the world through adapting their pre-existing social self to find a way to live within it. As people experience or undertake activities some of their knowledge of the world is constructed but through the lens of their already existent self (Bourdieu, 1984). Culture plays an important part in determining how individuals view themselves within their role at work and the wider world. Within their role at work TAs tend to display a nurturing, caring role towards the children they work with, they want to '*be the best experience it can be for the children*' (TA 1). When talking about their roles the data showed that at times all the TAs

responded using an emotional response framed by their inhabiting structures that supported a particularly gendered role. In this sense there is a congruence between the domestic field, as Bourdieu would term it, that they inhabit and their role in it and the fields they inhabit through their roles at work.

Much of the day to day work activity of TAs is socially prescribed and identifies them as belonging to a particular field made up by the school, that TAs inhabit and their particular forms of being within it are in turn reflected in their emotional responses. Bourdieu's approach demonstrates how people are organised within society and institutions and it offers possible reasons for why society becomes organised in a particular way at the micro-level (Webb *et al.* 2002). Thus, recognising how power and identity will affect the TAs in their role and their emotional response to these is vital. The vocational space, the social field made up by the school, that TAs inhabit and their particular forms of being within it are in turn reflected in their emotional responses, recorded in what they say and the body language used.

A paper from Vincent and Braun, (2010) highlights the '*emotional labour*' that can be exhibited by a person showing positive emotions for example: kindness, assistance and caring, and this led me to considering the dispositions and characteristics of TAs in this school. These positive outward emotions are displayed because TAs view them as what is expected when working in their role, even when it impacts negatively on them. There were a number of interviews where almost all of the TAs exhibited these characteristics, whether through what they said, or their physical responses during the interviews, which were recorded in my reflections. Even in adversity the TAs displayed positive outward emotions, this demonstrates the level of emotional labour they deploy within their everyday work.

A quote from one of the reflections showed the emotional response from TA 1 to being asked about an example of where the lesson went well:

> *'She talked about how she wanted to do well not just for herself but also for the children. She smiled very broadly and her tone changed, she was passionate, animated and excited to talk about the children, and how she liked to make their learning experience '**more**' exciting.'*
>
> (Reflection 1, p.3)

The word 'more' was emphasised and she used hand gestures here to demonstrate how she wanted it to be the best experience it could be for the children in her care. This TA kept a reflective journal of her thoughts and was about to commence teacher training. She viewed personal development very highly and was constantly looking for ways to improve as a professional. At another point she said:

> *'That's when you start to panic because you don't feel prepared and that's not good for you or the children because you do doubt yourself and you do question. And I think if you reflect or dwell on it too much it can affect your mental health in the long term. I think that is why there are a lot of teachers who go off on the sick.* (*But that's just my opinion*).'
>
> (Interview 1, p.4, lines 7-10)

At another point she noted '*But that's just my opinion*' and I noted in my reflection that it was clear that from her facial expression and posture that she did not value her opinion as highly as that of the teachers. She viewed them as having the necessary knowledge and experience associated with being higher in the hierarchy of the school. She went on to say '*Because sometimes as part of a team I don't like to say too much.'* (Interview 1, p.4, lines 6-7).

> *'Sometimes, I don't feel as if it's my place to add something. Because they are teachers they are trained they know what works and what doesn't work and sometimes I feel as if hmm, just keep quiet, just go with the flow.'*
>
> (Interview 1, p.5, lines 10-12)

The nurturing aspects of TA 1's habitus were that she wanted to do the best for the children in her care, and she suggested her opinion carried less weight or that it was socially fitting for her

to be less confident in asserting it. TA1 remained silent on a number of occasions and did not voice her opinions to the class teacher (Belenky *et al*. 1997). In my reflection I noted:

> *'When she talked about her work with the children it was clearly visible on her face, her expression, mannerisms, intonation in her voice that she was passionate about the children and her work. This was lovely to observe and was not forced in any way. She could have talked for ever about her work with the children and it was clear that she just wanted to do her best for them, the school and for herself.'*
>
> (Reflection 1, p.3)

> *'She referred wanting to inspire her own children to become more and that she was leading by example in her family as she was the first person ever to obtain a degree.'*
>
> (Reflection 1, p.3)

The response from TA 3 reflects the emotional landscape of her work role:

> *'I love it, I absolutely love it. I really, I thrive on seeing the children gaining something from it. That's why I love this job to be honest because I just think, I just think you get such, I call it a 'buzz' really because it's lovely to see them learning and it's satisfying.'*
>
> (Interview 3, p.2, lines 33-35)

When TAs received liaison time along with time to plan and prepare the majority of them were motivated and happy in their work, the reflections corroborated this. This information was recorded in the reflection following interview 3:

> *'She takes the children's development and learning very seriously and liked the fact that the children and the adults through team talking really got something from it. The team talking contributed to what the adults were able to do to support within the lesson she felt. Everybody knew what was expected from them.'*
>
> (Reflection 3, p.4)

From the twelve participants no one said that they did not value being prepared through liaison, planning and preparation time. When it fell down due to outside influences impacting on it they freely shared those reasons and why in their opinion it had not worked. Here the emotional response collected through the data was evident in what the TAs said and how it affected them. There were a few incidences where the TAs received the planning but it was not as well

planned as it could be or the objectives did not match the lesson activity. In the main this was confined to a particular area in school and was not across more than three classes.

> *'And they just worked really well, really challenging, problem solving; the language that was coming out was fantastic.'*
>
> (Interview 4, p.2, lines 17-18)

Collaborative working together was shown to be something that TAs and teachers valued.

> *'We'll look at the planning and we'll say how shall we approach this, what shall we do and sort of work it out then between us.'*
>
> (Interview 4, p.2, lines 38-39)

> *'XXXX leaves it up to me to decide what I want to deliver, where I feel that they're missing pieces of the jigsaw.'*
> *(Classroom name referred to here)*
>
> (Interview 6, p.3, lines 26-27)

There are numerous examples presented here within the interviews where the TA puts on a brave face and just gets on with it. Previous research has found that the emotional labour in keeping up the social norm of what is expected when working with children is something that practitioners default to, even if it is at their own emotional expense. (Hochschild, 1979; 1983).

TA 10 felt that she had to do a particular job that was beyond her remit and, to magnify the problem, she had not received any plan of what the teacher wanted her to do.

> *'I feel as if I've had to take it on board and I'm only a level 2 TA.'*
>
> (Interview 10, p.4, line 1)

A lack of clarity on TA roles may reflect the low status of the profession (Emira, 2011). There were a number of accounts where TAs' used emotive language to express this, the majority of comments concerning the lack of liaison time or planning and preparation time.

The data showed that the TAs vocational habitus is suffused with emotional language: about the individual's experiences, actions, and beliefs. This is an indication of how they see their position within the structure of the organisation and the wider world. As shown within this section TA 1, TA 9, TA 10 and TA 11 all shared difficulties they had experienced during the interviews but

were not able to speak to the class teacher concerned about those issues. This all indicates a relative powerlessness felt on their part, a response to a lack of agency that a lack of preparation and planning represents, and potentially reproduces, a powerlessness that was, to an extent, internalised by them, in a manner that is consistent with a habitus rooted in the experience of particular gendered and class-based structuring structures.

4.5 TAs' use of language

A more informal style of language was evident through the interviews, the TAs were drawn from the local community and bring into school their own way of speaking. On some occasions they did use more formal language when answering some questions but, on balance, the language was more informal in nature. This can sometimes mean that teacher's voices are listened to more than the voice of TAs. Professional language is more detached, objective and logic, which is often associated with male language (Gilligan, 2003). Professional women such as teachers have elected to use this style of language, so the TAs, who use more emotional language and ways of speaking can remain voiceless (Rubie-Davies *et al*. 2010). This gives weight to the credibility of the process, as the TAs felt no need to alter their language use during the interviews.

TAs may lack the assertiveness to discuss things they wish to change with people who they perceive hold greater authority than they do, such as teachers. There will be a number of different layers pertaining to why their voices are not heard (Gilligan, 2003).

The data showed there were incidences where the children were referred to as kids, which highlighted the difference between professional and more informal language. This highlights the way one word can alter the formality and professionalism of the sentence.

Here, TA 6 talks about liaising with teaching staff over an intervention in phonics:

'We quite frequently do change it and then it just gets moved to the next week when we know that the kids might have learnt it a bit better…'

(Interview 6, p.3, lines 7-8)

Here, TA 6 talks about the lack of preparedness for a session:

'And you just think like 'Oh….right, sit down kids, I'll be two minutes' and then I'll go in the classroom and grab what I need sort of thing…'

(Interview 6, p.4, lines 21-22)

4.6 Systemic management resources which affect preparedness

This sub-theme was split into three parts with lack of time being one aspect, space being the second part and resources the third part. All three were identified as barriers to achieving liaison time and planning and preparation time. These three sub-themes were managerial or structural in nature as they were not things that the TA had direct control over.

4.6.1 Time

The sub-theme of lack of time was identified as managerial/structural in nature as the TAs' time was directed by management. For example, if time to support preparedness was not planned into their timetable, it impacted negatively on the TAs day and it and was cited by the TAs as one of the barriers to preparedness. Here TA 6 had been on lunch duty and had returned for the afternoon session without the chance of setting up prior to the session.

'It just makes you not ready, I know it sounds, it doesn't sound right, it just makes you sound like you aren't doing your job and it's not that you aren't doing your job it's you haven't got the time to do what you would want.'

(Interview 6, p.4, lines 41-42)

TA 6 also commented on how the lack of time can impact on her being prepared for the afternoon session, the comments were made as she works as a lunchtime supervisor during the lunch hour. The reflection typed immediately after the interview showed that she was trying to do a lot of things in a short space of time which meant that sometimes she had not had the time to set up and prepare in advance.

'Well it just affects it because you're not ready, and then obviously you don't have the sheet ready or whatever it is that you are going to use for resources.'

(Interview 6, p.4, lines 41-42)

'It's time a lot of the time; it is that there is so much to do every day.'

(Interview 6, p.5, line 11)

'Well unless everyone could just give more time, then, you can't. But there is times where it just all falls apart and that is life, you can't make them more minutes in the hour, it just doesn't work.'

(Interview 6, p.5, lines 37-39)

I reflected on this interview that I found her language use to be different to her demeanour, noting:

'She repeated that it was the 'snowball,' effect and that you can't make more time, sadly she said that she found this very stressful and that some days in particular when she is literally coming in from lunchtime with her lunch box still in her hand and the children are eagerly shouting its phonics time. All the while she was smiling as she told me this and she was able to see the lighter side of this.'

(Reflection 6, p.3)

TA 8 who had not had any prior information communicated about the task and the children she would be working with before being asked to work with a small group of children, was deeply unhappy about this situation, commenting that she 'thought that she should have been given some time even if it had been the night before.' She said it was just literally '*there you go, you're doing this now'*.

(Reflection 8, p.3)

'I was given no resources, no planning time, no time to do my own assessments.'

(Interview 8, p.3, line 13)

Lack of time did creep into other main themes as well, as a significant number of TAs shared how it sometimes impacted on other activities they were undertaking in school.

'I think just having the time, even if she wasn't able to speak to me - just a note.'

(Interview 1, p4, line 24)

TA 10 shared instances where the teacher would not allow her to take the child or children to undertake a timetabled intervention:

> *'If I go for a child and it's sometimes, 'oh you can't have them yet.' That's my time ticking and then I'm thinking, so then I'm, I'm having then to find another slot, another day to fit that in.'*
>
> (Interview 10, p.4, lines 41-43)

The reflection was useful here in analysing the comments from TA 10. During the interview TA 10 produced an intervention timetable that had been annotated with the original version still visible. This showed that there was a lot more expected from the TA than there was actually time for within the school day. This TA worked across two classrooms on a full-time basis. There were occasions where she was also asked, or told, to cover in other areas of the school but, she maintained that, even when she was out of the classes she covered, that she still endeavoured to fit all of the interventions in that she was timetabled to cover. The reflection demonstrated her perspectives on this matter:

> *…'It also meant that once she has got behind schedule on her plan or timetable, there is virtually no way of catching up with fitting in all the things she has to do… She shared some alterations on the particular timetable she was showing me so I wonder just how unworkable it was before the workload was reduced!'*
>
> (Reflection 10, p.3)

There was only one positive quote regarding this, where, in this instance, the time slot was booked in advance to facilitate the TA delivering the intervention.

> *'We booked our time slot, having the resources there just saves time because you have still only got 15 minutes to try and get them to move on …'*
>
> (Interview 1, p.2, lines 12-13)

4.6.2 Space

Space was a significant issue when taking children out of class for a short small group or 1:1 intervention.

TA 11 commented that:

'I would say that is the main thing (space) and maybe just a little bit of time for planning and getting my head round what I'm doing instead of just running from one thing to another.'

(Interview 11, p.5, lines 21-22)

TA 1 cited the importance of securing a space to carry out interventions was a priority:

'Schools are busy and if you don't book a little place or don't communicate with other members of staff then rooms will be taken… There are other teachers and TAs and groups of children that are coming out all the time so space, it can be an issue.'

(Interview 1, p.2, lines 8-11)

TA 5 also cited the lack of space leading to time spent on interventions being wasted as an area of difficulty in school.

'The biggest thing that doesn't work for me is the lack of space for interventions.'

(Interview 5, p.5, line 9)

She went on to say:

'By the time you find somewhere to go you might have lost five or ten minutes of your intervention time.'

(Interview 5, p.5, line 13)

'The biggest thing that doesn't work for me is the lack of space for interventions. You think well fair enough. It's not fair on the children because you, well you know what it's like you go and get the children from the class and you say right come with me, so then they end up wandering round.'

(Interview 5, p.5, lines 9-12)

'I keep resources in the PPA room for interventions and then somebody will be in there with the door closed.'

(Interview 11, p.5, lines 17-18)

The lack of space impacted on TAs being able to access their resources, as well as taking small groups and one to one interventions. It also had repercussions on when they received their planning and preparation time. The room that they were offered to use sometimes was double booked or there were other activities going, as this extract from TA 12 identifies:

'There's often music lessons in the staff room and the other available table usually is in the corridor and children are changing books, doing accelerated reading, you

can't always focus and you need to concentrate if you've only got half an hour, so it's space.'

(Interview 12, p.4, lines 25-27)

In contrast TA 9 had a positive intervention planned three times a week where she had the space and the time.

'It was in a quiet, controlled area, they weren't getting distracted by anything else because; we had that separate place to take them.'

(Interview 9, p.1, lines 26-27)

In my reflection I noted her clear feeling of control over what she was doing and her opinion that the environment and atmosphere was very important in supporting the children with their learning.

'She liked having the little break out cloak room in nursery as it had glass doors, so for safeguarding purposes it is a good place to take children but mainly because it is quiet there are no distractions. This means that the children often tend to get more from the sessions within this space than from the main area of XXXX when it is a speaking and listening activity.'

She very much thought that the environment supported the children's learning on this occasion.

(Reflection 9, p.2)

The power dynamics in relation to the difficulties TAs experienced with finding a space to carry out interventions were demonstrated within the hierarchies and inequalities between teachers and TAs in school. I have interpreted how this inequality may look for TAs in school as these issues were not brought to or considered by the management of the school prior to the study, there is some supposition in these interpretations. There may be some awkwardness on the TAs part to feel able to use a particular space or room without prior approval from a class teacher or someone they perceive to be in authority. There may be some TAs who feel that they have to negotiate the space they are hoping to 'inhabit' for the intervention they have been asked to carry out (Bourdieu, 1984). These inequalities experienced through the power dynamic

may also have had the effect of shutting their voices down as they were worried possibly about a number of issues (Belenky *et.al*, 1997). These issues included the lack of preparedness due to not having the room ready for the intervention, the room already being occupied by another member of staff, or other members of staff entering the space, they may not have known that a room was required in advance of the session. From the data collected from the interviews TAs were keen to 'do the right thing' and would not wish to be seen as 'getting it wrong' in their day to day work. The power dynamic would be present in the form of the pressure that some TAs felt to complete the teaching in the session; they were also concerned that the efficacy of their teaching was compromised due to the shortened session.

4.6.3 Resources

All the TAs were in agreement that, when they had the resources or the time to gather together what they needed, they were happy in their role.

> *Making sure that the resources are there as this saves time. So children are not waiting and helps with the pace of the lesson.*
>
> (Interview 1, p.2, lines 7-8)

> *In nursery I need to set resources up for the lesson.*
>
> (Interview 3, p.1, line 41)

> *'I just feel more confident going into it, you know what language you are going to use and what resources you are going to get out.'*
>
> (Interview 4, p.2, lines45-47)

> *'I made sure I had it to hand. And made sure it was all there.' **

*This quote is referring to the resources required in advance to deliver the session.

(Interview 9, p.2, lines 2-3)

In contrast there were a number of instances where it caused stress or worry to the individual or some resentment when the resources from the teacher were non-existent or didn't enable TAs' to feel prepared. TA 12 commented that:

'You don't get an awful lot of interest in what you've delivered and you think well if you're not providing me with resources. And you think well if you're not providing me with resources and I'm using a lot of my 30 minute slots to prepare your resources and then you're not really bothered what I deliver, it doesn't make you feel that good.'

(Interview 12, p.4, lines 45-47)

The resourcing concerns were often closely linked to structural aspects in school such as time or space.

Similarly, TA 3 having been left some resources linking to the planning for a session she was going to cover, noted:

'I do feel like maybe resources could be better prepared.'

(Interview 3, p.4, line 35)

TA 9 commented that she was not given any starting point or planning to teach the session in advance, or where to collect the resources from:

'I just didn't have the tools available to plan a lesson because I'm not a teacher.'

(Interview 9, p.3, line 40-41)

'I was told where the resources were, but only general resources in cupboards.'

(Interview 9, p.3, line 44)

Here the reflection was valuable in contextualising the interview and giving a fuller understanding of the emotional impact of this:

*'Her shoulders were slightly dropped during this part of the conversation and I admired her courage for speaking to me about the fact that she was '**not happy'** (emphasised these words) that 'I did not know what I was doing.' She was also very clear that she did not want to just try her best she wanted to know what she was supposed to be doing. Clearly she had not had enough input from the teacher.*

It impacted on her work as she was worried about coming in to school, although laughing at this point I could see that this was quite a difficult time for her and she just didn't know the specific area that was required.'

(Reflection 9, p.3)

TA 12 was also not given the necessary resources to teach the lesson:

> *'Although teachers are supposed to leave us resources when we are delivering a lesson for them during PPA it still doesn't always happen so those half an hours' are completely essential to my role.'*
>
> (Interview 12, p.4, lines 10-12)

TA 11 had not received any planning and had not had the time to collect the resources before the start of the lesson. The lesson was a maths lesson and she wanted the children to have concrete objects to enhance their understanding of the concept being taught:

> *'I didn't have the resources that I needed so it was a case of pulling whatever I could together quickly to help with this lower ability group.'*
>
> (Interview 11, p.2, line 45-46)

4.7 Presentation of next steps

This chapter has presented the data through the interviews, reflections and the reflective journal it has included examples of qualitative and structural responses from the participants. The range of data has included the reflections made very soon after the interviews had taken place. The next chapter will discuss what those findings mean; the structural/managerial and qualitative findings. The transferability of this research to other schools will also be explored.

Chapter 5

Discussion of findings – conclusions

This chapter offers an interpretation of the data presented in chapter 4 elicited from the thematic analysis diagram first introduced in chapter 3 (fig. 2 page 104). The interpretation of findings is further supported through links to the literature. The questions TAs were asked related to their views on preparedness for teaching, following the implementation of evidence-based changes to their roles in school. The principal finding from the data was preparedness; three other main

themes that flowed from preparedness were: liaison time with the class teacher, planning and preparation time and the TAs' emotional response. Both liaison time with the class teacher and planning and preparation time had relevance to an understanding of the individual TAs situation and to structural and managerial aspects of their experience. The third main theme related to the TAs' emotional responses. From two of the main themes: liaison time and planning and preparation time, three sub-themes were developed. The sub-themes included: the time allowed to complete things, the space available to carry out their tasks and resources.

All three main themes had some aspects that were reported upon positively and negatively, primarily the data showed that when the preparedness worked well the TAs' felt in control and happy in their work. The TAs were able to articulate what preparedness looks like for them and offer sound reasons for their opinions. Conversely, when they were not prepared they were unhappy and reported lacking confidence in their work and lesson delivery, importantly, again they were able to articulate why the preparedness had not worked for them.

5.1 Preparedness – liaison, planning and preparation

TAs' felt that being well prepared supported them in feeling confident in their work, enabling them to have prior discussions, plan and obtain information on groupings and activities supported their preparedness.

The preparedness for lessons TAs described was dependent on a number of factors being in place, these included:

- The time to talk things through beforehand with the class teacher or person delivering the lesson.
- The teacher sharing quality relevant planning in advance with any resources or specific information available, along with the groups or tasks which the TA would be working with.
- Having the time to plan and prepare what they were going to undertake and gather resources.
- Space available where the intervention or group work would be taking place.
- Good communication, so if things changed as they often do in schools, that they were given as much notice as possible through verbal, or electronic communication.
- Invitation of TAs to attend team or planning meetings, particularly during dedicated time such as professional development days or twilights.

It is clear from the outcomes that the TAs' liked knowing in advance what was expected from them, as Belenky *et al.* comment:

> *'They like clarity. They want to know exactly what they are expected to do – what they are responsible for.'*
>
> (Belenky *et al*. 1997, p.42)

Additionally, it is clear that there was no substitute to TAs for being able to talk through the proposed lesson(s) with the teacher in advance. Without liaison being implemented regularly the TAs' preparedness was negatively affected, which, in turn, they believed, had an impact on the children's' learning.

When the preparedness was not as good as it could be a number of the TAs were unhappy about this. The effects of not being prepared had quite a profound effect on the language they used to describe their experiences and how they viewed their role within school.

TA 1 said:

> *'I felt like I was going in blind and I didn't feel as well as what I should have done.'*
> (Interview 1, p.3, lines 20-21)

A similar remark was made by another TA:

> *'I just feel more confident going into it; you're not going into it blind.'*
> (Interview 4, p.2, line 45)

One interpretation of the metaphor 'going in blind' would suggest TAs chose the word 'blind' to mean lack of understanding and clarity of what was expected from them. This metaphor is powerful because the choice of language demonstrates how it affected their preparedness. Equally, the comments demonstrate that the TAs' felt the children's learning was not supported due to their lack of preparedness. Where TAs had possibly not had the time to prepare in advance or be part of the planning process they were more likely to perform in a reactive role in contrast to teachers who had planned and organized the lessons (Blatchford *et al.* 2009a).

These reflections are very similar to remarks made in the DISS studies where TAs' described being unprepared as going into lessons blind (Blatchford, Russell and Webster*,* 2012).

Overall, what the TAs' articulated here mapped to the findings within the DISS, WPR, and EDTA projects, that is they were very clear about what worked and what did not and being in the role allowed them to share these experiences and offer an insight into their world. What the TAs said has a clear message for the SLT in as much as they have views and opinions on what happens but, unless directly asked, they did not voice their concerns. The TAs' voice has not been heard in the past in school and it important to listen as they have first-hand, important information about the existing practices in school. There are occasions where they are instructed what to do without being listened to or included within discussion. There are

implications for practice here for the SLT to place a greater importance on listening to and collaborating with TAs.

What can, therefore, be drawn from this is that collaborative working was shown to be something that TAs' value. This outcome is supported in the literature, for example, in the work of Attwood and Bland (2012), who concluded that all the TAs they interviewed were in agreement that they liked to be prepared and have the opportunity to work with the class teacher about what their role would be in lessons.

5.2 Power dynamic

Drawing on Bourdieu's idea that there are different positions occupied by individuals who have negotiated the space they inhabit that both reflect and reproduce hierarchies and inequalities between groups, I attempted to consider the power dynamic, both in terms of the research methodology and design, and within the context of the TAs' work in school. The power dynamic in the researcher process is discussed in previous Chapters, here consideration will be given to the power dynamic in the context of TAs' notions of preparedness.

TAs reported that the process of planning and preparation time fell short of their expectations and there were instances where the teacher was not on board with the changes made. As the DISS studies, the WPR and the EDTA project showed, TAs were not to blame for this lack of effectiveness, it was the way they were deployed by teachers, school leaders and management. Effectively, the TAs were told what to do and which children or classes to support. If non engagement of teachers was not addressed in school the process lead to the TAs' thinking 'what's the point', which would lead to demotivation and negative feelings around their work.

In one interview TA 2 did mention this point:

> *'What's the point in doing it to be honest, um, I know that it's not just me that feels like it, because you write it down it stays in the folder, the only one they will ever really look at is the writing and the numeracy apart from that...'*

(Interview 2, p.4, lines 49-50)

There is a clear power dynamic here in favour of the teacher, the TA described how she had planned and created resources that supported the children in their learning and had put together a comprehensive A4 folder with information relating to the children she was working with. Within the folder were a number of timely assessments, during the discussion within the interview she showed me the folder and it did contain clearly tracked assessment and evidence for each of the children she had been working with.

Alongside the evidence contained within the A4 folder my reflection on the interview also supported my interpretation of her feeling of powerlessness.

> '*She has fed this back and looking directly at me she confirmed this, she had a look of disappointment on her face, she was so passionate about what the previous school she had worked in had activities and how it supported the children more in their learning. There was a definite disappointment in her demeanour and in the way she spoke.'*

(Reflection 2, p.3)

The TAs have important information that is, in effect, trapped knowledge, as they do not voice this to the teachers. The TAs are complicit in the powerlessness, not in a conscious or consensual way, but as an effect of their habitus. They do not see themselves as valued or valuable enough to speak out. Bourdieu sees this as part of symbolic violence:

> '*For symbolic power is that invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it*.'

(Bourdieu, 1991, p.164)

This reflects their feelings of self-worth, which form an intrinsic part of these feelings, the type of feelings that can lead to some women, especially women who perceive themselves as, or who

are understood as being in, low status occupations, struggling with feelings of isolation and feeling like they don't have a voice (Belenky *et al.* 1997) or living a lifestyle that suggests, because it is rooted in necessity, that they do not value themselves (Bourdieu, 1984, p.380-381). This was evident in this study where there was a reluctance on the part of TAs to say what they thought to the class teacher or even the student teachers, although this could also be a sign of them adapting to their habitus to the field of the school, recognising that their 'emotional capital', of value in Bourdieu's domestic sphere, is not always so in the professional one (Reay 2000). Here a number of TAs talk about not getting the chance, or not feeling able, to speak to the class teacher or the SLT.

> '*Teachers and management don't know really what they do and how valued they are because we never give them the chance to speak and be given any objectives to work on.*'
>
> (Interview 12, p.4, lines 33-34)

> *'Sometimes, I don't feel as if it's my place to add something.'*
>
> (Interview 1, p.5, line 10)

> *'Even when women held strongly to their own way of doing things, they remained concerned about not hurting the feelings of their opponents by openly expressing dissent. They reported that they were apt to hide their opinions and then suffer quietly the frustration of not standing up to others.'*
>
> (Belenky *et al*. 1997, p.84)

TA 11 explained that she would not want to directly speak to the student teachers about the difficulties she is experiencing.

> *'Because I wouldn't want to make them feel … … I don't think it's a conversation I would want to have.'*
>
> (Interview 11, p.4, line 14)

In this instance TAs are open to taking on board what other people say but they can have little confidence in their own ability to speak, this is identified as received knowers according to Belenky *et al*. (1997), and as a consequence of this they tend to still their voice and instead listen to others. Here the TAs have information which is important and would benefit their

working practices if it were shared, but this knowledge is trapped due to the TAs not wanting to voice their concerns or frustrations. This means that their voices are silent and there is no record of their frustrations shared, which has implications for the class teachers, the children and the school. This is not to place blame at the foot of the TA for this, it is a consequence of their habitus in the field of the school.

Some of the points raised relating to the profile of TAs within this section have served to demonstrate that there are, for some, strong feelings of powerlessness and of policies being imposed upon them, over which they have no control or input (Barkham, 2008; Cooke & Lawton, 2008).

There is a mismatch of power and changing practice depends greatly on having teachers on board with ensuring preparedness is embedded in the school routine (Belenky *et al*. 1997; Gilligan, 2003). If teachers are not on board with the process then the liaison and planning time is undermined and, subsequently, the TAs will not be prepared for their role in lessons. Therefore, teacher's engagement alongside the role relationship between the TA and teaching staff affects preparedness before, after and in their response to it. Teacher's engagement may be improved by a mix of professional development, voluntary agreement and policy enhanced frameworks.

This is supported in a study by Roffey-Barentsen (2014) in which TA respondents identified the need for equality between TAs and other members of the school workforce with access to resources being made available. Respondents endorsed the need for paid, regular provision for planning and liaison time.

In contrast, outcomes from this study identified a more fluid power dynamic in some instances, where TAs had developed a specialism through training in a particular field and they became the go-to-person to support specific children in school, indicating their ability to adapt to their habitus to change in the field and their role in it. TA 7, for example, has a specialism with ASD and ADHD and has received specific training over the past five years to support her with breaking activities down using coloured baskets to show the start and the end of a task. The teacher liaised with her to see if her group would be able to undertake the task in question.

> *'Um, … there have been a number of times, … to be fair, I don't mean to blow my own trumpet but I think, I just do it without even realising, so there's quite often times where XXXX will say to me, look this is what we are going to do, how do you feel your group will manage with it? Do you think we can tweak it anyway? How would you do it?'*
>
> (Interview 7, p.4, lines 2-4)

> *'It was in her words 'it was good because the feedback then meant the planning was adjusted to meet the needs of those particular children.' She really had come into her own now and took over really as the expert; her body language was such that she was confident.'*
>
> (Reflection 7, p.4)

> *'The class teacher also asks advice from her as to how she has broken particular tasks down on some occasions so that she can incorporate it into her teaching for a particular maths task for example. They appear to have a very good close working relationship.'*
>
> (Reflection 7, p.4)

The sections taken from the reflections also support the information that the class teacher needed to talk it through with the TA before finalising her planning and establish how she would approach the task.

Another instance was where TA 6 was given the authority to get on with the phonics intervention she was delivering.

> *'I think there is more of a positive for me because XXXX and XXXX over the last two years have said, 'right, you know what you are doing,' trusting my own judgement and trusting me, because I've been doing it for that long that, they say*

'you know what you're doing, you know what the kids need' and maybe listening to my input more than was previous, I think there is more of a positive.'

(Interview 6, p.6, lines 16-19)

Here the TA feels empowered through the afforded autonomy enabled within an area of expertise she had developed, an area where she has acquired some specialist knowledge of the curriculum. Here the TA is not claiming that she does it all but she is aware that the teachers are listening to her input more than previously. There appears to be increased confidence in each other's ability amongst the teachers and TA, which provides consistency for the child receiving the intervention from an appropriately trained TA. Again the TA can adapt their habitus when their educational or cultural capital increases within the field.

5.3 TAs' use of language

Outcomes from this study showed that TAs often employed an informal style of speaking that is often emotive in nature, a form of communication consistent with their habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). Within the context of this school the majority of the TAs are drawn from the local community and have been educated within a ten mile radius of school. As such they bring into school their preferred ways of speaking and this comes across when they have a point to make. TAs were more likely to be enthusiastic in their discussion when reporting on positive things than negative instances. Words like 'great' and 'I love it' reflect how they feel about when things worked well and the preparedness was there. Phrases such as '*most of them have been great*' (Interview 8, p.4, lines 20-21) were used when referring to teachers, involving both a strong element of praise and a potential for expression of an element of dissatisfaction, but only when probed.

TA1 also noted:

'It's great, it's so much easier, it takes the pressure of you, um, there's not as much marking to do.'

(Interview 1, p.7, lines 8-9)

Other examples were:

'I think also it would be nice if maybe we had more free flow outdoor, rather than having a set playtime.'

(Interview 2, p.3, line 39)

'I love it, I absolutely love it. I really, I thrive on seeing the children gaining something from it.'

(Interview 3, p.2, line 33)

The narrative the TAs shared during the interviews demonstrated their emotive ways of talking about their role. One way to interpret what TAs say is to consider the emotional capital that they invest their talk with, which was evident on a number of occasions. Implicit in this were particular social norms about how adults should behave and act with children, and sometimes the needs of this work could be at the expense of the individual. TAs clearly did put the children first and, even though they were frustrated with the lack of preparedness at times, they ensured that they 'got on with things' for the sake of the children in their care.

These nurturing aspects of the individual and the impact of emotional labour on them when looking after children are directly linked with the nature and ethics of the 'mothering role' (Vogt, 2002). The nurturing role for example could support future educational policy where educators consider carefully what kind of culture we want the children to experience. Central to these nurturing qualities is the philosophy of Reggio Emilia where emphasis is placed on building and sustaining relationships. The work of Belenky *et al*. (1997) also recognised the nurturing role that women play, particularly working with young children, or when supporting mothers and these facilities are predominantly staffed and run by women (EHRC, 2009; Yeates (2005). It would appear that teachers and managers have adopted a more professional language at work, whilst the TAs use a more vernacular women's language (Rubie-Davies *et al*. 2010). They bring this into the workplace which, because the professional women have adopted a different way of speaking, may be received in a different way to discussions between teaching staff and illustrates different ways of adapting their habitus to the field, signalling their place within it and thus acting upon it in particular ways that reproduce and/or modify it.

Their experiences directly influence their thinking and, in turn, the way they reported information during the interviews. Levels of education, cultural backgrounds and home environments, the different elements of their habitus, will all play a role in the language choices TAs make when working in a professional environment (Vincent & Braun, 2010).

As TAs are drawn from the local community and exhibit a nurturing role they are more likely to act as ago between parents and teachers (Webster, Russell and Blatchford, 2016).

On other occasions phrases and instruction offered to children contrasted with professional discussion and the use of appropriate terminology. The following example was offered as an explanation for counting on ten more in tens.

'I said be the dolphin, jump up over the air and add 10 more.'

(Interview 1, p.1, lines 30-31)

Selecting the language '…*be the dolphin*' is vernacular, in that the term '*dolphin*' would not be used to represent professional mathematical vocabulary for counting on in maths. Similarly '…*jump up and over in the air*' within in a professional sense could confuse a number of children as some superfluous language is contained within the sentence, making it wordy and difficult for the child to understand. A study by Rubie-Davies *et al*. (2010) concluded that TAs' explanations were sometimes inaccurate or confusing as the previous quote demonstrated. This informs us that the language choices we make are important to support the recipient's understanding of what is being said.

There were some incidences where the children were referred to as 'kids', which highlighted the difference between professional and less formal language.

'And I said to the kids right, 'this is you, you're the giant, this is a picture of you,…'

(Interview 5, p.1, line 28)

'And the kids are coming to me saying, Mrs XXXX it's phonics time and I'm like 'argh… right O, OK, let's get the mat out.'

(Interview 5, p.4, lines 16-17)

'…then I'll send the kids off for their two minutes run.'

(Interview 5, p.4, lines 26-27)

Emotive language and feelings relating to the difficulty the child had with handwriting are at the heart of the next two quotes.

'I remember really feeling for this child because obviously the handwriting gets written on the board and they get shown how to do it…'

(Interview 9, p.7, lines 7-8)

The same TA later shared feelings relating to her self-satisfaction following her intervention with the child.

'And she just got it and I just thought, oh I was so pleased with myself,…'

(Interview 9, p.7, line 14)

There were also a number of instances where children were referred to as 'lovely' or 'nice', which demonstrates a less formal style of language. When meeting up with TAs there were instances where they had set up activities to support social skills outside the classroom and worked with supporting children with playing and interacting with their peers. Another occasion where unstructured times of the day benefit the children is during lunchtimes and playtimes. During these more unstructured times the TAs often supported social interactions between children and appeared to be aware of the children's emotional needs. TA 5 shared how her gardening club has supported the children's social interactions:

'Um… I love my gardening at the moment, can I just say I'm really into my gardening club. I think the impact that's had on the children has been phenomenal … and I think that's nice for key stage one, key stage two interrelations as well, it's nice for the older ones to have a caring nurturing role with the younger children.'

(Interview 5, p.5, lines 21-24)

There has been substantial research into TAs' academic impact on learning within formal settings such as the classroom, or tracking the progress and gains in specific interventions, such as literacy and numeracy, but generally this is effective only when the TAs have been appropriately trained (Alborz *et al*. 2009). The EEF toolkit has a number of interventions that show the cost, evidence strength and impact in terms of months, for schools to refer to. There appears to be a paucity of research carried out on the way TAs approach structured and unstructured contexts, and how their more informal way of talking and interacting impact on this. There are some advantages of using less formal talk when working with pupils, in terms of putting pupils at ease and some social and emotional benefits. The style of language chosen may also be a factor in TAs' ability to make positive relationships with children and parents, but without further study within this area it is difficult to establish a full account of the benefits. A study from Rubie-Davies *et al*. (2010) found that TAs were chattier and more likely to use colloquial language when working with pupils compared with teachers. Research from Rubie-Davies *et al*. (2010) compared teacher and TA language and found that TAs were more likely to ask closed questions, not check appropriately the pupils' understanding, offer fewer explanations, sometimes offered confusing explanation and were more likely to prompt pupils, ask a question and then answer it for them (Rubie-Davies *et al*. 2010).

As TAs are often drawn from the local area they can be aware of how family life and the community impacts on the child and the parents and this local knowledge can be valuable when working or communicating with parents. As Webster, Russell and Blatchford (2016) concluded, as TAs are drawn from the local community, and exhibit a nurturing role, they are more likely to act as a go-between, between parents and teacher. Similarly, research conducted by Mansaray, (2006) found that TAs acted as a go between different groups in school, including the children and parents, and had multi-facetted relationships with these groups. This was further supported by work from Dunne *et al*. (2008) where children described TAs as being closer to their level than teachers.

TAs use of less formal, local language and their more informal role in school, all indicative of being less identified with authority, may be of benefit in establishing and maintaining relationships with parents and children a way in which their 'emotional capital', as Reay calls it (Reay, 2000) appears to translate to the workplace in a limited, and at times limiting, fashion.

The next paragraph in this section is not explicitly about language, however, the emphasis is on relationships and how this was evident in the data. This emphasis on relationships, getting to know the child well and having a good relationship, was viewed as important in supporting the children's needs. Here TA 5 talks about working with the children from a young age to build relationships.

> *'And I think it's easier to build relationships with these children if you're working with them from an earlier stage.'*
>
> (Interview 5, p.5, lines 3-4)

In this instance TA 8 is talking about the positive change which supported her building relationships, this is what she returned in her annotated copy, received through the respondent checks:

> *'I've really enjoyed year 2 as I've been working in this year group for most of my weekly hours. This has enabled me to settle down into a good routine with the adults I am working with, pupils and also given me the opportunity to get to know the curriculum better and build good relationships.'*
>
> (Interview 8, p.4, lines 13-16)
>
> *'I can honestly say that the team of staff I am working with at the moment are approachable, understanding; supportive and I have a great working relationship with them.'*
>
> (Interview 8, p.4, lines 28-29)

Within this quote TA 10 uses the word 'know' in respect of knowing what the children need ten times on page 3, from lines 16-29.

'And the reading I do a lot of reading with them so I know where they are … I think I have a knowledge of them and know that I can offer the correct support.'

(Interview 10, p.3, lines 24-25)

TAs identified knowing the children and where they were working at along with building good relationships a number of times in the interviews and also in the reflections.

'When she talked about her work with the children it was clearly visible on her face, her expression, mannerisms, intonation in her voice that she was passionate about the children and her work.'

(Reflection 1, p.3)

In this reflection, knowing the children and working frequently with them also supported the practise of TA 11.

'She also cited the fact that she runs maths interventions with this group as well so that when she is supporting in class this enables her to know where they are at and what they need next to move their learning on. By knowing the children and their level she feels that it has supported her working as a general TA when she supported in class.'

(Reflection, 11, p.2-3)

'I know the children better and what they need extra help with and what resources they already have to help themselves.'

(Interview, 11, p.1, lines 26-27)

The focus of this TA was supporting the children by making connections with what they already knew to be the case with more independent learners.

'And it went really well because they had the time to ask the questions, they had time to use what they knew and think about – well actually, yes I do know that, yes I can do that and they saw the pattern in the method and the strategies that they used. Which made them hopefully more independent in class.'

(Interview 1, p.1, lines 36-38)

The preparedness was evident from the information given within this quote. Here the TA describes how, because she felt she knew the children really well in terms of what they had covered and where they were at in class, she was able to scaffold them to use what they knew.

A contributing factor would also be that the session was talked through and organised in advance, which facilitated the time being available for the children to ask questions during the session. This TA liked the fact she knew what was expected and she was prepared for her role within the session. Her relationship with staff is such that she liaises regularly and that benefits her and the class teacher, and empowers her to know where the children are at and what their next steps are. The class teacher trusts her with carrying out the particular maths interventions that she has been specifically trained to implement. This places her in a position of greater authority due to her training to support children in this particular area of the curriculum. This illustrates the importance of keeping up the liaison, planning and preparation time between the TA and the class teacher as without these sessions, there is always a danger that, without close planning and supervision, the children could be receiving sessions that don't move their learning on. It would still be the responsibility of the class teacher to plan the sessions to make the best use of the available time and resources but the TA has a strong relationship with the children who, as a result, feel able to ask questions so that she can support them to make connections with their previous learning.

In conclusion the use of 'emotive' language, the routes used to express their ideas differently to teachers, sometimes impacts on TAs ability to have a voice; in some instances they remain silent when they do have opinions (Belenky *et al*. 1997). This less formal style of language can also confine TAs within their vocational habitus, with the limits they impose on themselves preventing them from moving into another field (Bourdieu, 1977). Simultaneously, however, it may be a factor in their ability to make relationships based on their emotional capital with children and parents.

When considering vocational habitus in schools it is important to recognise that, despite it being a predominantly female environment, the TAs' voice is not often heard. It could be argued that

this is because professional language is framed in the language of detachment, objectivity and logic, which is associated with male language. Professional women have adopted this tone, so the TAs, who haven't, remain voiceless. Teachers use a more formal style of deliver and language in contrast to TAs who are more likely to use colloquial language with pupils (Rubie-Davies *et al*. 2010).

It could also be argued that TAs are reluctant to put their point of view across and feel uncomfortable about saying what they really think. They may lack the assertiveness to discuss aspects of their work they wish to change with people who they perceive hold greater authority than they do. It should be acknowledged that there will be a number of different layers at work for why their voices are not heard.

Literature from Gilligan (2003) supports this idea that:

> *'As we have listened for centuries to the voices of men and the theories of development that their experience informs, so we have come more recently to notice not only the silence of women but the difficulty in hearing what they say when they speak. Yet in the different voice of women lies the truth of an ethic of care, the tie between relationship and responsibility, and the origins of aggression in the failure of connection. The failure to see the different reality in women's lives and to hear the differences in their voices stems in part from the assumption that there is a single mode of social experience and interpretation. By posting instead two different modes, we arrive at a more complex rendition of human experience which sees the truth of separation and attachment in the lives of women and men and recognizes how these truths are carried by different modes of language and thought.'*
>
> (Gilligan, 2003 p.173-174)

It is evident that the TAs' voices concurred with much of the findings of other projects, but in listening to their voices, there were subtle differences as well. This included: teachers having to be on board with the changes implemented; that TAs were keen to keep and maintain relationships, rather than report precisely what they had done/known; that the TAs often absorbed the time and space issues and sorted them out in the background, resulting in these

issues not getting addressed at a systematic level as effectively they are hidden and TAs using less formal language to describe their roles in school, which may have had the effect of closing their voices down.

5.4 Systemic management resource issues which affect preparedness

5.4.1 Time

Time was viewed as a significant issue affecting preparation by TAs; this was also the case in the DISS studies (2003-2009). This issue of time was cited in many forms, including liaison time, planning and preparation time, feedback opportunities and intervention delivery. Additionally, as noted in the interviews, just because opportunities for teachers and TAs to meet were scheduled did not mean that this was always happening or that it was effective as it could be. There were instances reported where the preparedness was not as good as it could be due to lack of time for planning or liaison in advance of the lesson, meaning that the teacher and TA had not met in advance. On other occasions the effectiveness was compromised due to a number of reasons including: poor quality planning, resources not identified in advance, roles and responsibilities not shared, computers without essential programs installed, lack of space to meet, lack of time to meet. This list is not exhaustive, it aims to demonstrate that effectiveness is compromised by numerous factors.

In this study TAs reported that where they had the opportunity to meet and discuss with the class teachers, they were able to share knowledge that they held about children that they worked with closely and that they believed this benefitted the children's learning. They also reported that there were benefits for the class teachers to plan more effectively to meet the needs of the children. The TAs responded positively about the time given to support preparedness, planning and preparation and liaison time. Equally they voiced their concerns

that if the time was not used wisely, they did not see the benefit of it. Their concerns regarding time came through in the majority of the interviews and TAs were clear that time must be used well for it to be beneficial within their role.

The responses collated from the interviews and reflections again mirrored the findings from the DISS studies and further work by Blatchford *et al*. (2009a) as TAs described their feelings about being unprepared.

> '*I just feel more confident going into it you're not going into it blind*.'
>
> (Interview 4, p.2, line 45)

As with a number of findings presented the opportunity for time to liaise and prepare before and after greatly depended on management supporting this in school and through TAs being deployed effectively. It also was dependent upon the teacher engaging with the process and being prepared to support the TA with the role they were being asked to play.

Additionally, the outcomes of this study showed that the successful use of the planned time to ensure that TAs were prepared was also dependent on other engagement and systemic issues. This included how on board the class teacher was with the process, how well the lessons were planned and how far in advance the planning was received and discussed. It also depended on the opportunities to gather resources and have a space available to work with the targeted children. Without the class teacher engaging with the process there was little the TA could do on their own it required team work, collaboration and guidance.

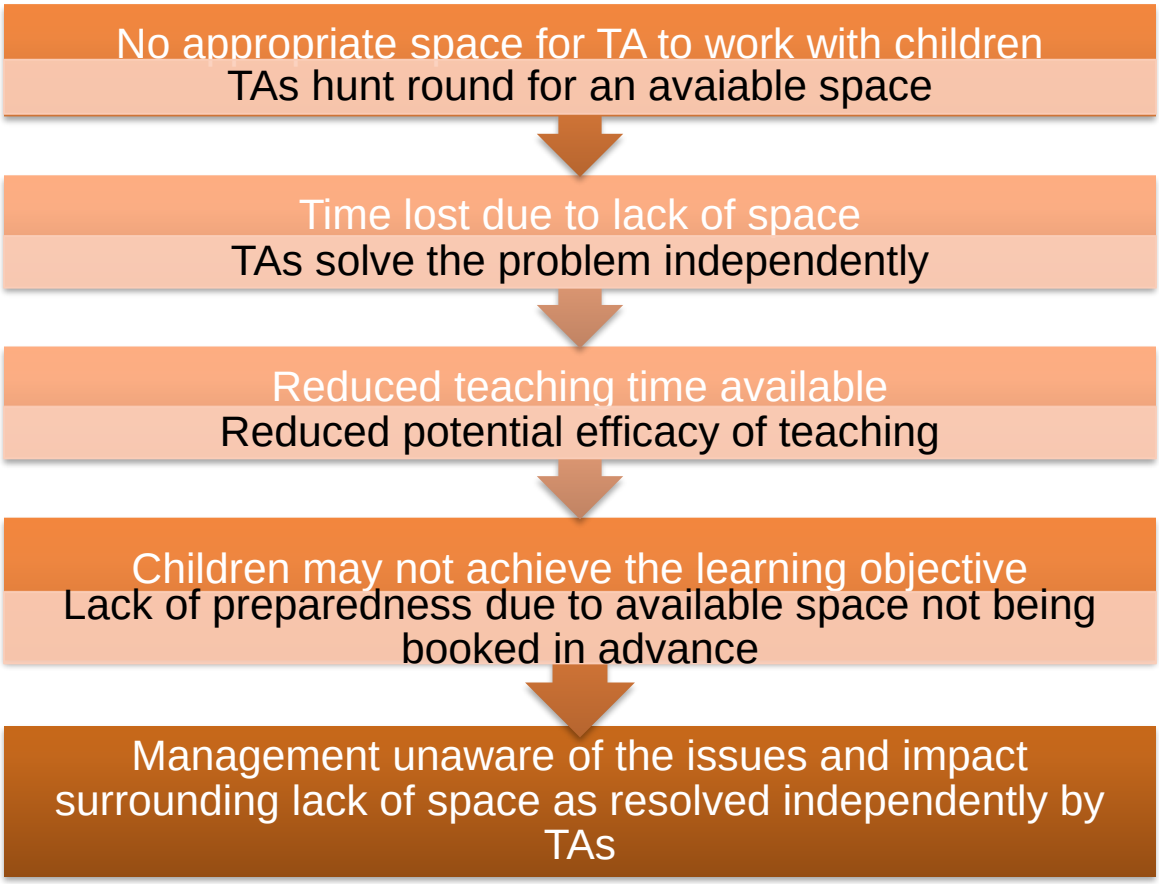
5.4.2 Space

Space or lack of space was another significant managerial or structural issue in supporting the preparedness of TAs. Although space was not directly mentioned within the literature within the schools that I have visited and worked in there seems to be a perennial problem of space. TAs

reported that space could present itself as a problem when taking children out to carry out interventions. When voicing how space could impact on them TAs said issues with space may present as there being no available room or area to provide necessary outside provision or meetings.

Figure 3 below shows the sequences relating to the lack of space which TAs find themselves faced with in school. The TA has no appropriate place to work with a group of children, so they hunt round for a space to conduct the session. Time is wasted due to the lack of space which leads to the TA solving the problem independently. This then impacts on the amount of teaching time available for the session which also reduced the potential efficacy of teaching. As a result of this the children may not achieve the learning objective. This feeds back into the lack of preparedness of TAs due to available space not being booked in advance. The management in the school were unaware of the impact surrounding the lack of space because it was resolved independently by the TAs.

Fig. 3



TA 5 discussed the lack of space leading to time spent on interventions being wasted as an area of difficulty in school.

'The biggest thing that doesn't work for me is the lack of space for interventions.'

(Interview 5, p.5, line 9)

Another problem highlighted by TAs was lack of space for planning and preparation time. There were issues with staff having to share a room with interventions going on, sometimes music lessons, and in some cases not enough table space to rest a laptop on.

Availability of effective working spaces for TAs to carry out their work is an essential role that management in their deployment of TAs should support. Having TAs hunt round for somewhere to implement an intervention is not an effective use of an expensive resource such as staff. The

literature supports where possible that children are supported in the main classroom setting alongside their peers (Dabell, 2019). Remaining in class is appropriate in many circumstances, however, there are occasions where one-to-one, or a specifically targeted intervention such as Plus 1 (a structured one-to-one maths programme), may require staff to leave the main classroom. Since TAs are directed to where and with whom they will be working, they rely on being deployed through management, the SENCO or class teacher.

As in other instances if planning and preparation are not addressed, or the teacher has not liaised with them, the TA may not know that a room is required until the session starts. A lack of space impacts on the preparedness of the TA and how effective the session will be in terms of the time taken to find a suitable alternative space or how long they have to plan or gather resources. While there is a wealth of information pertaining to the deployment of TAs and how they might lead interventions or small group work outside the main classroom there is a paucity of information and the impact of lack of space on the preparedness of TAs (DISS; EDTA; Nasen, 2014; Webster, Russell and Blatchford, 2016; WPR).

If TAs are spending time looking for space this inevitably reduced the time they have available to work with the children and, if the space is inappropriate, it reduced the potential efficacy of the teaching, all of which is likely to impact negatively on the child's learning.

5.4.3 Resources

Resources also affected the preparedness of TAs in carrying out their role, this ranged from not having the physical resources to hand for the start of a lesson. Poor communication prior to the lesson in the form of lack of planning and preparation or liaison time also impacted on resources being located or prepared in advance of the lesson starting. It also impacted on the planning and preparation time that TAs had to plan; they were receiving half an hour each day to support

preparedness. The impact of this was an ineffective use of the time offered if, for example, the lap top a TA was using did not work or a particular programme they required to support their planning was not installed on the computer.

Resources not working or not being made available caused a lot of stress and frustration for TAs in their day to day working. TAs' reported that they just got on with it even though they felt a range of negative emotions:

> *'Well it just affects it because you're not ready, and then obviously you don't have the sheet ready or whatever it is that you are going to use for resources. You are still trying to have the lesson and find the resources at the same time.'*
>
> (Interview 6, p.5, lines 3-5)

As well as TAs being annoyed there is likely to be an impact on the quality/efficacy of the session as the resources affected their preparedness for the session. TAs were very clear about the importance of their time being spent wisely and were not happy when they were unprepared.

When considering the literature available on preparedness there are a number of ways that management can support TAs with preparedness, through liaison time, planning and preparation. It needs to be part of a whole school approach where all staff are trained and supported to embed the process fully. Lesson plans would also play an integral role in supporting preparedness, along with sharing good practice and the use of research available from: Blatchford, *et al*. (2009a); the DISS project (2009); Nasen (2014) and MITA (Webster, Russell and Blatchford, 2016). The advice offered ranged from supporting TAs with appropriate questioning through the use of Bloom's taxonomy to planning which is clear about whom the TA is working with, what the focus is and how it is going to be achieved. To be most effective it should be shared and discussed with the TA in advance of the lesson. Advice within literature

also makes a number of recommendations about planning and how it should be structured along with how to support TAs teaching classes and how to plan more effectively.

Self-audits are another tool, again there are a range of tools available within literature and to download from the Internet for senior leaders to analyse and implement change (DISS project, 2009; EEF; Nasen, 2014; Russell *et al.* 2013). When such changes are implemented it is important that the process is kept under review and amendments made as necessary to maintain the preparedness and effectiveness of TAs.

These outcomes, that elicit the TAs' voice of their lived experience of the evidence-based changes made. This adds important detail to what we already understand about the deployment of TAs to best effect their preparedness for their role.

Chapter 6

TA preparedness: addressing practice issues, implications for future practice, and transferability of findings

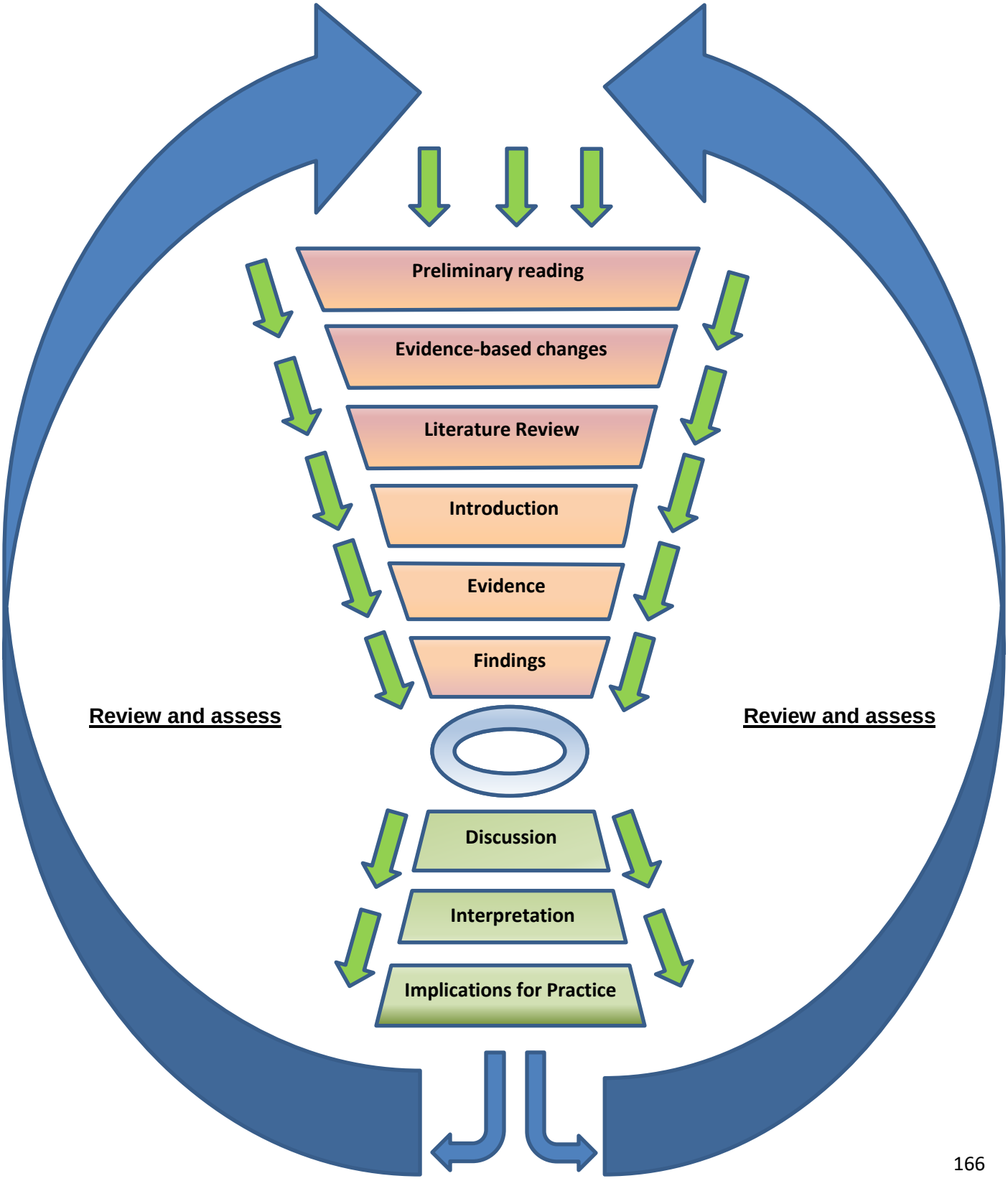
6.1 The DISS, WPR and EDTA projects

Implementing the cyclical model on the next page (fig.4) supported a systematic approach to each stage of the research process. It also demonstrated that this iterative approach would be a significant part of the process and that the researcher's reflections and thoughts would feed into the process and findings as a whole. Recommendations from the DISS studies, the WPR, the EDTA, and the MITA projects shared by the EEF, established what can be learned about TAs and the detail of their deployment. Implementing the recommendations it became clear that there were some straightforward solutions presented in the DISS studies, the WPR, the MITA and the EDTA projects portrayed that were, in practice, much more complex to implement. It required human beings to work together and continually communicate, it also required the teachers to be on board with the changes and implement the strategies that would support preparedness across the school. This required consistency, which required a whole school approach and the involvement of all staff in its development. What the TAs articulated did map onto what the DISS studies, the WPR, the MITA and the EDTA projects found, but where there was frustration on the part of TAs was where opportunities to make use of their knowledge relating to the children was not asked for by teachers.

The TAs' reflections on these evidence-based changes were central to establishing what could be developed further following implementation. In this way the research has taken the implementation of the guidelines further, beyond the formal interventions which the TAs were specifically trained for.

Fig. 4

Cyclical process of data collection through to implications for practice



TAs' views supported evidence-based TA deployment as they liked having the opportunity to talk through and be well prepared, they liked receiving effective planning that identified their role within lessons and supported them in what the expectations and objectives were. They liked knowing what was going to happen next and the feeling that they were in control of what they were being asked to undertake.

Within this study TAs' views concurred with much of what other projects found but, in listening to their voices, what I found were important subtleties in the implementation of this. This included, for example, the need for teachers to be on board, that TAs were keen to keep and maintain relationships, rather than report precisely what they had done or what they know. That the TAs often absorbed time and space issues and sorted them out in the background, which resulted in these issues not being addressed at a systemic level as they are hidden. In addition that TAs' informal language to describe their experiences and their roles in school may have had the effect of rendering their voices to be seen as less important. This leaves the question of what does this mean for management in the school so that the deployment of TAs is as effective as possible for children's learning?

This final stage of the thesis presents the implications for future practice that could be used as a starting point in the school and possibly repeated in different school settings. This process, in line with previous stages of the research, required an iterative approach, further reading and updating school action plans and policies. This collaborative approach supported working towards embedding the implications of the research into practice across the whole school for staff currently employed and future staff and student teachers.

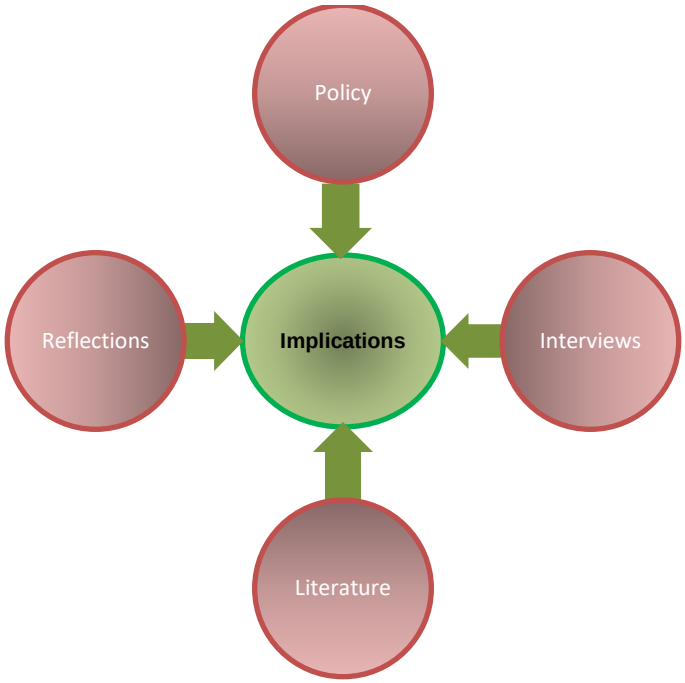


Fig. 5

The findings showed that teacher's level of engagement with TAs affects preparedness in many interrelated ways, from planning and preparation time, to liaison time and feedback time. This section shows some of the difficulties reported on how the teacher's responded to preparedness.

From the reflective journal it was clear that although liaison time and planning and preparation time was introduced, and does, in the main, happen, there were still a number of structural or managerial difficulties that can reduce its effectiveness. The sub-themes identified showed evidence from a number of interviews and reflections that identified possible reasons for difficulties, namely:

- Planning and liaison time
- Power dynamic
- Systematic resource issues
- The TAs use of language

6.2 Addressing issues of planning and liaison time to support TAs' preparedness

To address issues around preparedness pertaining to planning and liaison time an opportunity here would be to share the planning that is being taught in class and relevant assessments, so that the TA has the information to support what they have been asked to work on with the child.

The class teacher will work within the same class every day; there is only one job share teaching post arrangement in operation. This means that a class teacher will plan, prepare and assess the children in their care many times during the school year. As such they are trained and highly skilled in what they teach and implement as teachers, this means that there will be instances where, for example, a child did not 'get it' and it is important to pass that information on. There are other instances where it is more complex and the judgement made will be in light of a number of different factors concerning the complexity of the situation.

Conversely, there were examples where TAs passed information on through feedback and on some occasions they expressed that they did not feel that the feedback was acted upon. This dissatisfaction was, in some cases, justified but in other instances there was a good reason why the class teacher did not act on feedback given. Where the TA had completed an activity away from the main class, or where they had been asked some aspect of the child's progress, the teachers sometimes did act on the feedback but possibly didn't always report this to the TA.

Those instances where TAs were not prepared and did not receive liaison time or planning and preparation time does have implications for management within the school. There were instances where TAs were just instructed what to do and were not given a voice.

In order to listen to what TAs have to say management should recognise that good communication is key to TAs being prepared, whether this is through liaison time or planning time. Significant points that TAs made relating to communication and sharing of information

were also analysed to see how potential areas of discord could be revisited to establish a way forward. Team minutes are now shared with all staff, including part-time TAs who may not have been present at the meeting. TAs now have a structure for one-to-one discussion on a termly basis, which offers an opportunity to talk about what is working well and what could be better. In addition to meeting termly with the TAs there is opportunity to facilitate, if there is an issue that a TA would like to discuss that day and provision will be made as far as is reasonable to meet with the TA in question.

Regular checking in with staff also provided opportunities to engage in conversation and opportunities to ask how things were going. This also supported a more in-depth understanding of the role of the TAs within this school and the varied activities they undertake within the school day.

6.3 Addressing issues of the power dynamic to support TAs' preparedness

There are a number of issues relating to the power dynamic and the trapped voice of the TAs; one of the benefits of conducting the interviews was that it gave them a voice within the research. Their contribution was that they offered knowledge and details relating to how they were deployed and prepared. Their reflections gave a window into their reality as they experienced it and how it made them think and feel. If TAs don't have a voice and report on their work it affects their preparedness for the job. This research showed that it can make them feel isolated and not in control of what they have been asked to do and that it is sometimes being done to them without any discussion. It also means that the learning of the children may be affected because important information may not be shared. Management needs to implement preparedness across the school and think carefully how to minimise the power dynamic through honest open discussion with TAs and teachers. There is no suggestion that everything shared has to be acted upon, or shared further, but that professional judgement ensures that important

and relevant information is shared and acted upon. This will support TAs and teachers in their roles and, in turn, support children in their learning.

TAs talked about their lives in school, they were clear about where things worked and where they fell short of expectations but often they were not willing to talk to the student teachers, or their class teacher, when they identified issues or difficulties. Continuing this research or indeed if there were future instances where lived experiences of TAs were required to be collated could allow for a narrative interview method to be used to support this process. One of the benefits to this could be that it can redress some of the power differential within the research process whilst providing information of their lived experiences (Elliott, 2005).

It would seem a reasonable request to offer time within the existing school arrangements each half term where the TA could discuss any issues or things that are working well, as they did in the interviews. Cover could be arranged if necessary, ensuring that TAs are not expected to attend within their own time or after/before the school day.

A couple of HLTAs asked for appraisal and this has been implemented for HLTAs, however, it would be appropriate to offer all TAs a time and place to discuss things more fully. From knowing the groups and the characteristics that some people possess it would be more beneficial for this to be conducted on a one-to-one basis. Working in a focus group or forum might mean that the TAs would just say that everything was fine, even if this was not the case. There may be some reluctance for some people to say what they really think in front of an audience. There would be a number of factors at work here, not least the power dynamic resulting from the person leading the group and the dominant personalities within the group and within the relationship between teachers and TAs there is a definite power dynamic. Ultimately how well the teacher engages with preparedness will impact on how prepared the TA is in their

role. If the teacher is unwilling or not committed to liaise and share planning before, after and in their responses to feedback, the TAs, through no fault of their own, will be unprepared in their role.

The implication for school here is that there is a power dynamic between the teacher and the TA that requires addressing, where the SLT need to work towards getting teachers on board with the changes. Opportunities could include: incorporating an objective to support preparedness in the performance management cycle; addressing any issues which teachers or TAs have; putting the structural resources in place and having teaching staff who champion the changes working within teams of people who may not be so 'on board'. Peers across school could also work together to promote effective working practices to support minimising the power dynamic. In other words there needs to be a system to support the benefits of working collaboratively, to develop and discuss ideas in teams allowing for a whole school approach.

6.4 Addressing TAs' use of language to support their role in school

TAs bring their informal, or vernacular style of speaking into schools; their language is often emotive in nature and this can impact on how their views are received (Belenky *et al*. 1997). One way to promote a more professional dialogue in the classroom is through professional development; the twilight session recognised TAs particular advantages regarding 'emotional capital' and their working relationships within the school. Teacher questioning was addressed in school through a twilight session, which included TAs. Examples of questioning styles were shared taken from Bloom's Taxonomy. Through looking at language for learning and supporting TAs to use approaches and language that is regarded as more professional, may address issues of language for learning. Teachers then modelled questioning during lessons and supported effective ways to support children's learning. Planning also identified the learning

objective along with any focus questions and vocabulary intended to be reinforced and used for the session.

There have been opportunities across school through professional development and support where TAs have developed the way they speak to pupils from using an emotive/informal language. This has supported developing the language TAs use to build up areas between different curriculum subjects; one key focus in this area has been to develop the children making links with prior learning in other areas of the curriculum. This was demonstrated in a number of interviews where the TA had encouraged the children to '*use what you know*' and '*make those connections from other areas of the curriculum*.' The staff code of conduct also supports staff with expectations, as does the behaviour policy and they have both been updated to support all staff to this aim. When developing or implementing a change thought needs to be made to ensure that the objectives are realistic, it is not reasonable to expect that TAs will possess all the training that a teacher has. Therefore, a realistic approach has to be taken that allows for improvement and developments to be made that are achievable.

School used the MITA programme guidance on TAs scaffolding children, which helped to support children being engaged with the task that they were working on.

According to the MITA programme schools that use scaffolding to support TAs interactions:

- *'Have a greater focus on learning – not task completion.*
- *Tend far less towards correction.*
- *Allow more space for pupils to think and respond.*
- *Have a better balance of open-ended and close-ended questions.*
- *Are timed and paced to allow pupils to think and work independently.'*

(Webster, Russell and Blatchford, 2016, p.105)

This idea supported the aim that school wanted to enable children to develop greater independence in being able to tackle new and challenging activities. A number of problem

solving professional development sessions were implemented that supported TAs and staff being more proactive in helping children to use what they knew and develop their independence. Appropriate scaffolding was used across the curriculum, in particular changes in the way maths was taught were introduced in 2016. Children have a challenge session on Fridays where the work is set with high expectations for them, with opportunities to put into practise problem solving skills at the forefront of their lessons. The year 6 classes call it '*the pit of despair*' and when it was first introduced the children struggled with it. Now they know that it is a lesson that they will engage in and that the expectation is that they are expected to have a go at it and that adults will only intervene if they are having difficulty. The idea is that children work things out with the minimum amount of help and have the opportunity to problem solve. Supporting staff, with appropriate scaffolding, has developed the independence and confidence of the children in school.

When TAs have been supported through professional development with questioning techniques and appropriate ways to promote language through effective lesson planning it improves their confidence and the way they interact with the children. The professional development opportunities also supported TAs to develop greater awareness of professional language structures used in school.

Teacher's assessment sheets across school show the questioning prompts that TAs used in particular tasks and the responses the children gave. TAs' reported being confident that the children had understood and achieved the learning objectives of the sessions; again professional development supported appropriate language and questioning techniques to establish if the child had understood the task. Those TAs who plan lessons also included the questions and key vocabulary that they wanted to include, often with assessment sheets to share with the class teacher afterwards. TAs also reported how developing and promoting

independence for children was important and TAs working in KS2 were particularly aware of the transition required to secondary and how the children would need to become independent learners.

Through appraisal and formal lesson observations in class there are instances where TAs are modelling the correct e.g. tense to use within a sentence or style of language appropriate for the audience. Many TAs use a crib sheet with specific language or key vocabulary which has been identified as essential to move the children's learning on. An external training course on developing children's range of vocabulary was delivered to staff in June 2018 this also impacted on the planning from teachers which is shared with TAs. All teachers now put the key vocabulary that they want the children to understand relating to specific lessons. This also leaves a paper trail of what the children have so far covered in their learning.

TA 3 demonstrated how putting a few limited resources out for the children to develop problem solving and resilience supported them in making a bridge to cross the river, in the story of Rama and Sita.

> *'I kind of believe in nursery that it's more beneficial if its child led. I feel like they gain more, I like to take a step back sometimes and not spoon feed them.'*
>
> (Interview 3, p.2, lines 22-23)

Here is another example where the TA would like the children to be challenged with developing their cutting skills:

> *'I was advised to cut them all, pre-cut them all, and I thought well what about the fact it would be better the children cutting them out themselves.'*
>
> (Interview 4, p.3, lines 34-35)

Later the TA talks about the lack of challenge and how the children need to learn these skills.

TA 1 has used the training on scaffolding to support a small group of children with counting on tens using a number line.

> *'And it went really well because they had the time to ask the questions, they had time to use what they knew and think about – well actually, yes I do know that, yes I can do that and they saw the pattern in the method and the strategies that they used. Which made them hopefully more independent in class.'*

(Interview 1, p.1, lines 36-38)

The support for TAs conducting group work also encouraged them to act as a guide where necessary to enable the children to interact and support each other in their learning. As in other areas of this research, and within the wider research literature, there was a need to support TAs with not jumping in or intervening unless necessary. The importance of pupil talk was central to how group work would be conducted across school. TAs were encouraged to resist giving too much support, or focussing on completing the task but were supported to use questioning to engage the children in their learning (Webster, Russell and Blatchford, 2016).

6.5 Addressing systemic management resource issues to support TA preparedness

6.5.1 Time

Following the evidence-based changes to the TA's role they now have half an hour each day to plan, collect resources and prepare. As a school we developed a consensus of what a TA's role is and how we could develop it. All staff were in agreement that the best qualified staff should support lower attaining children, or children with SEN, and that, where appropriate, teachers should deploy TAs within their classroom to work with these groups. Once TAs' roles were defined it supported making other changes in school to support good time-management and consistency across the whole school.

The school email system has been used to support room availability to lessen TAs hunting round for a space to carry out interventions. Staff have time within the school day in which to meet and discuss with them, in advance of lessons. Many interventions are carried out within the pupil's classroom which enables the teacher to have an overview of what is being covered. Interventions are specifically targeted and shared with the SENCO on a six weekly basis. If they are deemed not to be working they are reviewed sooner and a more appropriate intervention is put in place. The idea is that pupils are not simply going from one intervention to another. Assessment data is also tracked every six weeks and, from that, children are identified who may need support. This system allows teachers, TAs and the SENCO to work together to formulate the most appropriate provision for each child.

In planning and assessment that is shared with TAs there is provision for feedback on how the session/intervention went; this also supports the next steps in planning. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that communication across school has improved and, where events are coming up, all staff, including TAs, are informed in advance, so that they have the time to plan their work accordingly. This has been evident in the reduction of TAs reporting instances of being informed of changes at the last minute. Further evidence of improved communication has been identified through the shared email calendar and most staff use the 'read by' option so that they know which staff have read the message they have sent. By introducing the time for teachers and TAs to meet it has supported preparedness across the school and increased awareness of the role TAs play in school. Evidence of this has been noted in TAs' planning, which shows clear expectations through intention, implementation and impact. There is thought going into how they are going to show what the children have learnt. Where small groups are being taken the resources are collated in advance and data elicited from TAs' reported greater confidence to take the sessions. The data showed positive emotions around liaison time and TAs' reported being prepared made them feel in control and that they were doing a good job.

The views shared during the interviews along with personal timetables of a number of TAs supported my role in planning their deployment. There were a couple of cases where the TAs' workload was not realistic and there was no way that they would fit in everything that had been planned for them to do. Through discussion and sharing information with the class teachers they were more aware of how long some of the interventions should last and that there was not enough time for the TAs to work with all of the children on the list. This brought about pooling resources so that TAs would share children from classes in groups where possible and that teachers would prioritise which children would require specific interventions or support.

6.5.2 Space

Another issue, highlighted as a negative finding from the TAs, was the lack of space available to carry out interventions and small group work. On the basis of what TAs were saying something had to change to prevent TAs looking for space once the lesson had started. The rooms available were added to the school's email system, with a calendar which assisted TAs in booking out time slots for their groups. Both hall timetables were shared with TAs, so awareness of when they were available supported them in their preparation. In the longer term the school is expanding and two additional classrooms are being created through building work, which is currently three months into a five month build. This will create a spare existing classroom that will have movable screens added to permit the room to be split into four separate working spaces or one large room, as required. It is anticipated that in the longer term this should reduce the difficulties relating to space in school.

The issue of lack of space had previously been solved on a case by case basis by TAs, but the impact on the children and their learning, as the flow diagram in figure 3 shows, was not supporting meeting the needs of staff, teachers or children's learning. Making a systemic change to the way rooms are booked out and ensuring all staff have access to the online diary

supports the rooms being more easily allocated in advance of the lesson or interventions taking place. Ensuring TAs have allocated space stops them wandering around school, wasting their time and the children's learning time.

A number of interventions or small group work activities were also considered to be appropriate to be carried out in the classroom. This reduced the possibility of children becoming isolated from their peers or being out of the classroom for more time than was necessary. It also supported the TAs in that they were not working on their own, without a teacher being on hand to guide or support, if they required it, during the intervention or group work activities.

Another implication for school was that, as the school would now become a two form entry school with the addition of the new classroom and class teacher, it meant that there would be the same number of TAs working between more classrooms. This in turn meant that class teachers, when planning to meet the needs of their children, could put together groups from different classes to work on a specific area of need. This has worked well in school and has been extended to support phonics interventions in KS2. This has also meant that TAs are not repeating the same intervention for a couple of children in each class and trying to use the space and resources available, in effect magnifying the problem of space and resources.

6.5.3 Resources

As there was an element of frustration about a number of resources in school a managerial or structural approach to the issue was needed. Utilising IT support by timetabling IT checks to equipment and upgrading with relevant programmes to support planning would support TAs with laptops that worked.

Planning is shared in advance and it is monitored by management to ensure that the guidelines from Webster, Russell and Blatchford, (2016) are followed. There have been staff and team meetings to discuss, model and share examples of good practice, so teachers can include planning to support and direct TAs in the classroom. When TAs have planning it enables them to content match what the children are doing in class into any interventions they are conducting. In this example TA 10 brought the focus in class into her guided reading group.

> *'...because I knew they were doing that then I concentrated on that 'in' the guided reading and we did expression and I sort of felt that I reinforced what had been taught.'*
>
> (Interview 10, p.1, lines 22-24)

When the planning did not match the learning objective steps were taken by the SLT, so that teachers put their planning on the intranet for the SLT to look at and discuss with the class teacher if necessary.

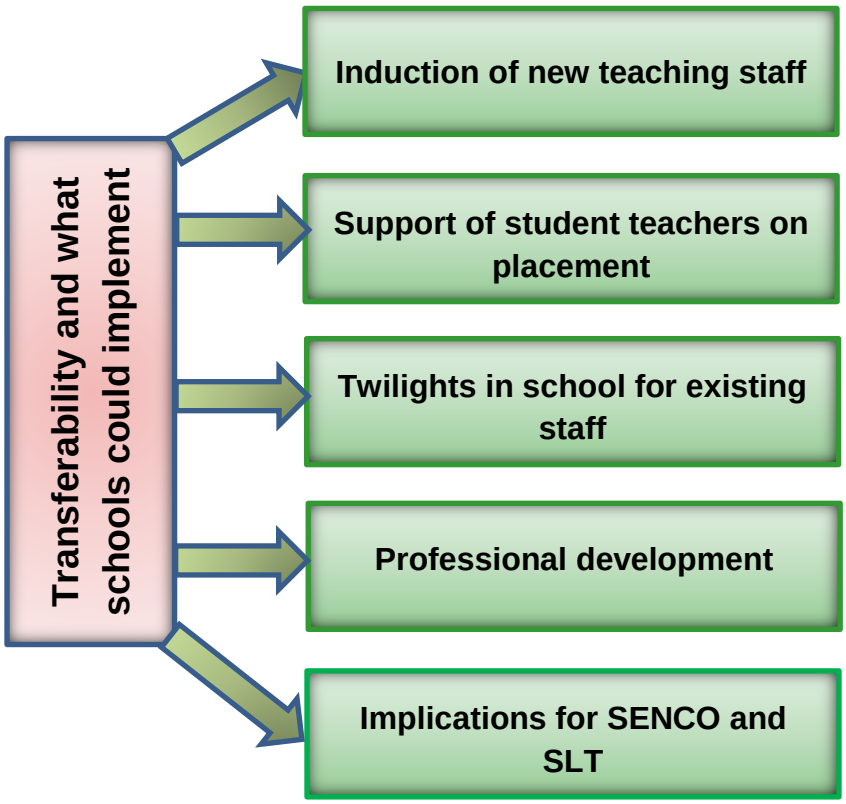
Resources such as topic boxes have all been labelled, a number have been updated and others are in the process of being updated to support delivering the curriculum. Maths resources are all stored in one area in the school and returned after use so that all staff and TAs have access to all of the equipment they need. Having an inventory and the resources in a central place has also supported the maths co-ordinators with audits and being able to order things without having to go between 15 classes.

As with some of the difficulties mentioned with space the resources are booked out by a member of staff conducting interventions of group work with children taken from more than one class. This means that TAs are more effectively deployed across school and resources and rooms are also used more appropriately. It also supports TAs having more opportunities to work

alongside middle and more able attainers, this in turn frees up the teacher's time to work with the children with a SEN.

6.6 Implications for future practice and transferability of findings

Fig. 6



These points are future plans for practice, drawn from the study. However, they could also be interpreted and read as transferable knowledge for other schools, drawing on the outcomes of the study.

6.6.1 Induction of new teaching staff

So that new teachers are aware that this it the way that TAs work in this school there should be a section inserted into the induction handbook for all staff to read and familiarize themselves with. Teachers should be made aware that TAs will receive liaison time and planning and

preparation time when they are planning lessons of group activities. That planning should be received along with any resources required in advance of the day the lesson is planned for. The outcome should also support new staff with meeting Teaching Standard 8, which supports the deployment of TAs and adults working in school.

Guidelines taken from Nasen (Packer, 2015) could be used to identify key components that should be included in planning to be shared with TAs.

'Planning for TAs. For this lesson, does the TA know:

- *The concepts, facts or information to be taught?*
- *The skills to be learned, practised or extended?*
- *The intended learning outcomes?*
- *What their role is / who they will be working with?*
- *Expected feedback to the teacher?'*

(Packer, p.12, 2015)

The outcomes from this study would extend this to include an additional focus on language and the resources, as these have been shown to be vital in TAs being prepared.

Effective working relationships could be supported though teacher/TA agreements along with clear expectations from school that support the working relationship between teacher and TA. It also requires the involvement of governors and SLT in the updating of policies to support changes being implemented.

Ensuring that resources are available to TAs in advance of the lesson along with information informing staff where they are stored. Where TAs are asked to track and monitor their interventions a medium whereby this information can be shared and feed into provision. Provision information, SEN support provision and EHCPs should be shared with all staff each time they are updated, so that what works well can be put in place with the child. This all

requires a whole school approach to ensuring that each individual is informed about the way in which TAs work within school.

Teachers reinforce what good TA practice is through modelling and discussion, this also allows for teacher and TA questioning techniques to be supported throughout school.

Further information for teachers and TAs which was accessed from Nasen:

- Making the best use of teaching assistants (March 2015) https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/teachingassistants-should-not-be-substitute-teachers-but-can-make-a-real-d/
- Deployment and Impact of Support Staff research summary: www.ioe.ac.uk/diss_research_summary.pdf
- Maximising the impact of TAs http://maximisingtas.co.uk/research/the-diss-project.php
- EEF TA project research (effective interventions) https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/reports/#search

(Packer, 2015, p.26)

6.6.2 Support of student teachers on teaching placement

When teachers are training and are collecting evidence to meet the teaching standards for QTS DfE (2011) it is imperative that they should be supported with how to work with other adults in their classroom. When student teachers come into school for a visit, prior to their main placement, and they collect information for their contextual analysis their induction could take place at this time.

Teaching Standard 8 also applies to student teachers and the expectation should be the same regarding how TAs work in this school. If teachers, mentors or tutors are to confirm completion for each of the teaching standards they need to see evidence relating to adults and staff being deployed appropriately in order to meet the standard. They should receive liaison time with the

student teacher, where that teacher has planned and is delivering the lesson; this should also include the planning in advance.

Information which would be shared with new teachers would also be shared with student teachers to secure more consistency in approach. Student teachers, along with any other adults in school, have support and discussion from their inductor about confidentiality and safeguarding of children and that, if given sensitive information, it is only to be discussed with those people working with the child.

6.6.3 Twilights in school for existing teaching staff

A session could be delivered to look at Teaching Standard 8 to support all teaching staff to develop practice as it is part of the school's appraisal process for teachers at present.

Examples of planning, which includes guidance from Nasen (Packer, 2015), could be shared so that the expectation of supporting the preparedness of TAs could be reinforced, along with developing questioning techniques. The way in which TAs are trained to work with children also affects preparedness and this has in part begun a cycle of training to support TAs being more proactive in school. There is also a national need for appropriate training to support TAs to be more proactive than reactive in lessons to support preparedness (Rubie-Davies *et al*. 2010). Similarly, the principles that would form part of the induction for new teaching staff and student teachers would also be reinforced throughout the school.

Examples of good practice embedded in school and why it worked well could be shared. Timetables could be discussed to establish if there was a more effective way of implementing preparedness and liaison time. Questions could be asked as to when it is appropriate to receive planning and what the planning should contain, so that TAs are empowered to support sessions

in the most appropriate way. To support with preparedness it would also be useful to ensure that all staff know how to access the intranet email system so that they can check in advance which rooms and areas are available for interventions and one-to-ones. This way of working could support a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities that each person plays in school and how important it is to support each other in being prepared.

6.6.4 Professional Development

The TAs' skills audit conducted during January 2017 supported creating a picture of what training TAs had already received, whether it was in house or through an external provider. It also highlighted skills and areas that TAs' felt confident about and what further support or training they would like to receive. (See TAs skills audits, appendices 10, 11, p.229,-230) The skills audit was useful to inform where further training was necessary and it identified where some TAs could deliver training and support other TAs across school.

Since the skills audit some TAs have sought to improve their professional development through training. These women hold what Belenky *et al*. call a 'received knowledge' position, as they are comfortable with advancing themselves as long as it is helping others, i.e. the children in their care (Belenky *et al*. 1997), which was found to be the rationale behind the TAs' responses when talking about their development,. This position is:

> *'Central in the women's voice: They should devote themselves to the care and empowerment of others while remaining "selfless." Accepting that the world is and should be hierarchically arranged and dualistic, the received knowers channel their increasing sense of self into their growing capacity to care for others.'*
>
> (Belenky *et al*. 1997, p.46)

The TAs wanted to help the children and as such their language selected supported their caring, supportive role towards the children. They did not want to be viewed as wanting the professional development for selfish reasons; they were undertaking it to 'be the best they can

be', or to support the children. Therefore, they justified their development as it assisted, or would help, other people, namely the children. Evidence of this wanting to undergo personal development that supported others was also identified through the women interviewed in (Belenky *et al*.1997), where similar views were expressed.

The reflection based on TA 1 supports findings in Belenky *et al*. (1997):

> *'She referred to wanting to inspire her own children to become more and that she was leading by example in her family as she was the first person ever to obtain a degree.*
>
> *When she talked about how she wanted to do well not just for herself but also for the children in her care she smiled very broadly and her tone changed, she was passionate, animated and excited to talk about the children, and how she liked to make their learning experience '**more**' (emphasised) exciting.'*
>
> (Reflection 1, p.3)

What Belenky *et al*. (1997) describe as a 'constructivist woman' tries to develop all aspects of their lives simultaneously and believe that they are interrelated.

> *'Constructivist women aspire to work that contributes to the empowerment and improvement in the quality of life of others.'*
>
> (Belenky *et al*. 1997, p.152)

Other TAs in contrast have increased their self-confidence through being able to liaise and contribute to discussions involving the children they are working with.

In this part of the interview TA 12 is discussing the appraisal system which was in place seven years previously from the time the interview was conducted.

> *'About 7 years ago all teaching assistants used to get an appraisal.'*
>
> (Interview 12, p.4, lines 31-32)

With the Standards for Teaching Assistants 2016 now embedded in school one full cycle of appraisal has been completed. The advice taken from this document, although non statutory,

complements the journey the school has been on with the deployment of TAs so far. Within the standards it states:

> *'Teaching assistants require support and opportunities to reflect on their own practice in order to identify their training needs. Teaching assistants should have an appropriate career development pathway and access to training within the working day.'*
>
> (Standards for teaching assistants, 2016, p.6)

The TAs completed an audit at a staff meeting in 23rd January 2017 in which they stated which interventions they were trained to deliver and what further training they would like to access in future. The audit was conducted before liaison time and deployment changes were made. Since then a number of specialised training opportunities, some accredited and others based on attendance, have been accessed by staff and the children are now benefitting from these in school. Care has been taken that TAs' professional development has formed part of a long term plan following discussion with individuals through appraisal, conducting the audit, the interviews and meeting the educational needs of children in school. Therefore, it has formed part of a long term strategic plan involving the way school deploys TAs on a daily basis. As such the following statement is an accurate view of the school's ethos surrounding TAs' professional development.

> *'School leaders should not only ensure that teaching assistants have the right knowledge and skills to provide effective teacher and pupil support, via appropriate and timely training and professional development, but also ensure that teachers are informed and equipped to fully capitalise on teaching assistants' professional learning and expertise.'*
>
> (Standards for teaching assistants, 2016, p.6)

Research from the DISS studies (2003-2009) revealed that that around three quarters of teachers had not received training on how to direct and deploy TAs in their classroom (Rubie-Davies *et al.* 2010). This implication is far reaching, not just in my school but nationally. Existing teachers and student teachers need to receive support in order to maximise the preparedness, and, therefore, the effectiveness, of TAs working in schools. Professional

development on questioning, through twilights and crib sheets, has been implemented since the start of this research but there is no room for complacency and this should be viewed as something which the SLT should keep reviewing and refreshing. When TAs are 'given explicit training and scripted lessons, they are successful in promoting pupil learning' (Alborz, *et al.* 2009).

6.6.5 Implications for SENCOs and SLT

The findings from this study could be implemented by SENCOs as they would be well placed to support the needs of children across school. They have experience of supporting class teachers and TAs in meeting the needs of children in school. There are a number of SENCOs who are responsible for the deployment of staff and as such would be well placed to monitor implementing changes. An initial skills audit could establish where the current strengths are in school and where areas for development of staff could be beneficial.

If the SENCO is not part of the SLT there would need to be an identified member of staff who would support the process moving on, such as a DHT or AHT. It would need to be monitored and reviewed so that the preparedness was being supported and new and existing staff were informed and on board with the changes made. Without having a key identified member of staff responsible for monitoring and implementing change the effectiveness these changes would be reduced. Effectiveness in schools can be improved through effective management of TAs and other support staff ensuring they are given the tools to support preparedness and, in turn, promote effective learning (Creemers, 1994).

Making sure that staff have liaison time, planning and preparation time is central to their preparedness, but equally there is a need to establish the availability of space for interventions, group work and an appropriate planning space for staff to prepare and plan lessons and

resources. Monitoring of planning to establish that it is going out in a timely manner is also important. It is important to be reflective and to not assume that something is happening just because provision has been put in place. Offering the TAs time to plan each day does not mean that it works out in reality, as TA 12 recalled:

> *'Now I get 5 half an hour sessions per week to do some planning, it's brilliant, the 30 minutes every morning is excellent. It's time we never had before.'*
>
> (Interview 12, p.4 lines 9-10)

The reality was that the computers were letting the staff down or there were children having private music lessons in the same space one session a week, or there were other people in the room, which caused great difficulty for the TAs in planning the time allocated.

> *'You can't always focus and you need to concentrate if you've only got half an hour, so it's space, it's computer availability, and it's just making sure you make use of the 30 minutes we are given.'*
>
> (Interview 12, p.4 lines 26-27)

It is important that management realise that if something is implemented does not mean that it is working or happening in practice. The SLT or a SENCO need to oversee it and keep reflecting and communicating with the staff deployed, rather than it being taken for granted. Listening to the opinions and voices of TAs will provide a more comprehensive whole school approach. Without the teachers being on board there is very little the TAs can do to make the changes work within the setting, it requires all staff to be fully committed to the process.

6.7 Implications for research, theory and policy

Following on from the implications highlighted in the previous chapters and previous section this research now seeks to widen the lens to include implications for research, theory and policy. Firstly, I would like to introduce implications for research which are intertwined with theory. The first point to note is that by building on the successes identified within this research pertaining to what works well could be a starting point for future studies. By finding out what TAs' views are

about their lived experiences or capturing the stories of the people who are doing the role through a narrative lens such as narrative interviews could inform theory and practice in the future. Currently, there has been a multitude of guidance and support on preparedness, all of which informs schools, I would like to see the TAs play a role in this cycle, by finding out what works from them. In this way they are not just being told what to do, they actually have some agency over their roles.

Another lens to develop through research could be through investigating the social dynamics within the school. My research found that ultimately any changes implemented within school relied upon individuals being on board and working together with effective communication between teachers, TAs and senior management. Further research could also support further professional development for teachers and TAs to support effective team-working and communication within school. The successful aspects of the research could then be implemented in theory to support practice in a range of settings and contexts.

The findings within this research relating to the more informal language which TAs sometimes used; had a number of useful aspects which would benefit from further research being undertaken. By looking through the positive lens, rather than a negative lens, the benefits TAs bring in terms of acting as an effective go-between parents, teachers and children could be further progressed. TAs may have a positive role to play in facilitating communication between parents and school, especially for less engaged parents who may themselves had negative experiences of school. The relationship between TAs and parents and their less formal approach to language use may act as a bridge between parents and school would be an interesting area to research and could support engaging difficult to reach parents.

Upon implementing recommendations in school it became clear that there were some straightforward solutions presented in the DISS studies, the WPR, the MITA and the EDTA projects portrayed that were, in practice, much more complex to implement. It required human

beings to work together and continually communicate, it also required the teachers to be on board with the changes and implement the strategies that would support preparedness across the school. It was essential that a consistent, whole school approach along with the involvement of all staff in its development was established from the start. Implications for policy would include highlighting what is working well and how those aspects can be developed further. Policy to support effective communication in school between teachers and TAs or indeed between staff could be used to support effective professional development and development when training as a student teacher or TA.

For policy makers the idea of inclusiveness is one which should also be considered as by including a range of different views and perspective is by its nature an inclusive practice. The research can inform policy makers on the positive relationships TAs develop with pupils, parents and staff in school and how this can be effective in supporting pupil's needs. The voices of TAs should be considered within this debate, this study is a small scale study, however, there will be others who also wish to elicit the voices of TAs. If this research is conducted with other small scale and larger projects it could add to what we know about TAs' voices and support policy in the future.

Chapter 7

Reflections

This reflective piece highlights what went well within the study and what I would change or do differently if it were to be repeated. It will also suggest what further studies may be needed to obtain a greater understanding on the issue of preparedness. There are research schools at present who are engaging in making the best use of TAs and their research has proved helpful in implementing and putting together the changes for this research.

7.1 Reflections of the research process as a whole

Throughout the process there were two texts that were critical in supporting a greater understanding about what was actually being said within each of the interviews, which included Women's Ways of Knowing, Belenky *et al*. (1997) and In a Different Voice, Gilligan, (2003). Ideas from Belenky and Gilligan were interwoven within Bourdieu's theoretical framework to support the analysis of the narrative interviews.

When exploring the relationship between Bourdieu, Belenky *et al.* and Gilligan the idea of hierarchy or habitus within school resonated with me. The TAs are trapped within their habitus within the structures of the school, their life experiences mean that they behave in a way which they perceive to be expected from them.

> *'Accepting that the world is and should be hierarchically arranged and dualistic, the received knowers channel their increasing sense of self into their growing capacity to care for others.'*
>
> (Belenky *et al*. 1997, p.46)

The work of Belenky *et al*. (1997) and Gilligan (2003) also recognised the nurturing role that women play, particularly working with young children, again the status of this role within the workplace may have the effect of confining them within their habitus. Similarly, there is a

mismatch of power and changing practice depends greatly on having teachers on board with ensuring preparedness is embedded in the school routine (Belenky *et al*. 1997; Gilligan, 2003).

The TAs chose a less formal style of language at times and this also confined the TAs within their vocational habitus, this was facilitated with the limits they imposed on themselves which prevented them from moving into another field (Bourdieu, 1977). On some occasions the use of 'emotive' language, or the routes used to express their ideas in a different way to teachers, sometimes impacted on the TAs' ability to have a voice; in some instances they remained silent when they did have opinions (Belenky *et al*. 1997; Gilligan, 2003). Here the structures or the habitus of the school appeared to impact on the TAs' voice, and having the effect of silencing them. This may reflect their feelings of self-worth, which form an intrinsic part of these feelings, these feelings that can lead to some women, especially if they perceive themselves as, or who are deemed as being in, low status occupations, struggling with feelings of isolation and feeling like they don't have a voice (Belenky *et al.* 1997) or living a lifestyle that suggests, because it is rooted in necessity, that they may not value themselves (Bourdieu, 1984, p.380-381).

When reflecting on the difficulties TAs experienced in relation to finding a space to work in school there may have been some TAs who felt that they had to negotiate the space they were hoping to 'inhabit' for the task they had been asked to carry out (Bourdieu, 1984). These inequalities they experienced through the power dynamic may also have had the effect of shutting their voices down as they were worried possibly about a number of issues (Belenky *et.al*, 1997).

When considering my thoughts on Bourdieu, Belenky *et.al* and Gilligan together they conveyed to me that the power dynamic was significant in that the TAs had important information that was, in effect, trapped knowledge, as they did not voice this to the teachers. The TAs acted within

boundaries which they felt they should work within as such the TAs were complicit in their powerlessness, this was not in a conscious or consensual way, but was possibly an effect of their habitus. This may be because they did not see themselves as valued or valuable enough to speak out. Importantly, the power dynamic that these authors discuss has played a significant role in understanding the voices of TAs and how their habitus and the structures of the school impacted on their roles (Bourdieu, 1984; Belenky *et al*. 1997; Gilligan, 2003).

To revisit the two TAs who did not take part because of a lack in self-confidence, and feeling that they did not have the knowledge or skills to support what would be asked at interview, did pose a number of questions. Butt and Lance (2009) call for work on TAs' confidence to be developed to support and empower them in their pedagogical role and there is evidence from Moyles (2001) that a lack of self-confidence, self-esteem, reflection and professional knowledge hold women back within their work in schools.

The literature review showed there was evidence that TAs are drawn from the local community, often starting as parents of children within the school and graduating to a TA position. This was certainly true here and their perception that they did not know enough about their contribution was quite worrying. These individuals are very accomplished in their work and certainly contribute greatly to the school.

The other person who elected not to take part in the study simply said they did not wish to, that it was not a personal thing, just that they would rather not take part. Similarly to the other two participants they could have contributed a wealth of experience, gained over a long period of time.

The reasons that two individuals gave for not wishing to take part in the research have led us to bring about the development of self-esteem and confidence through support, coaching and training, as recommended in the work of Butt and Lance (2009). This is a change that will take time and a change in mind set, however, there is an aspiration to see this succeed in the long term within school.

Using narrative research supported capturing of TAs' voices was central to this study and they reported their experiences both positively and negatively, with honesty and a sense of humour. There were times when they were clearly frustrated about systemic or managerial issues that arose in school, which led to them not wanting to speak out on some occasions. In other instances they solved problems themselves and put everything into supporting the children as well as they could, without the luxury of preparedness in place. One of the benefits of implementing narrative interviews supported my depth of understanding of the research process was that there are both limitations and benefits to adopting this approach. I am aware that this method will not create an exact replication of what was shared, but instead offer "*a measure of coherence and continuity to experience*" (Hart, 2002, p.156). A positive aspect is that it allowed the participants to tell their story which in turn allowed the participants to enlighten the researcher with what it was like for them in the workplace. The success of eliciting TAs' voices can be attributed to the planning of the interviews and the relationships between the TAs and myself.

When the preparedness was there they were very on board with the evidence-based changes that had been made and they reported favourably on it. I welcomed when they said 'it could be even better if…', particularly when they disclosed the lack of appropriate space to plan or carry out interventions. Although there has been an awareness surrounding lack of space for some time the fact that TAs were sometimes 'wandering around' because of this had not been known.

The laptops that were unsuitable to plan with were another issue that I was not aware of until the TAs shared this with me. These are issues which could be improved with planning and spending budgets wisely, without the TAs' voicing these concerns some of the issues would certainly not have been addressed. Being an insider, I feel supported the research process and brought about changes that were positive for the TAs working in school.

The research also highlighted that just because the changes had been implemented did not mean that liaison time or planning and preparation time was actually taking place. Indeed the TAs shared that sometimes it fell down because of time, on other occasions the class teacher was not on board with the changes. This again was something that, on the surface, because the planning was being shared with management, it was not clear that there was an issue that some TAs were not receiving planning in advance.

One of the most significant points to take from this research is that TAs would need interviewing more than once. There are a number of reasons for this: as a researcher you can follow up on previous discussion and establish if any issues they raised have been addressed; you can offer support and address if, or when, new issues arise without waiting for this to go badly awry and, equally, you can continue to develop two way communication and the relationship with the TAs so that they are more likely to come and share when things are not working for them.

If I were to do further study on this I would interview the TAs who are still in post since the interviews in the summer of 2018. I would also work more closely with the teachers to ensure that they are all on board with the changes made.

The success of training opportunities that are being offered to staff now have supported preparedness and the HLTAs are having appraisals, in light of what staff said in the interviews

and the skills audits carried out from the MITA guidance. I would not assume that the process of preparedness would have been addressed and not require upkeep. I would see it as something that would have to be a whole school approach and that all staff, including teachers, would be required to play their part in, in order for it to be effective. Training and support for group work, questioning and scaffolding and, crucially, supporting and promoting children's independence, would also need to continually be embedded through the school. This would be a cyclical approach because TAs leave and new people come into school, along with new teachers or student teachers. Refreshing the message also supports people to feel empowered to carry out their role effectively and know what the expectations are within school.

I would develop opportunities for sharing the work that is done in this school within my local cluster. I think that there are significant opportunities for preparedness to be developed in schools, not least a reduction in the amount of children with SEN spend away from their classes. The provision and training put in place would be a minimal cost as it could be done through twilights or professional development days and could support the children in this area of the North East significantly.

Preparedness is key to adults being able to carry out their work as effectively as possible, without preparedness staff feel under pressure, less able to do their work well and it affects them emotionally. Ultimately, a lack of preparedness in all likelihood reduces effective learning and wider opportunities for the children in school. The success of preparedness very much depends on the relatedness between teachers and TAs and the complexities of different people working together. Establishing this information from the interviews has been viewed as successful in meeting the aims of the research.

7.2 Reflection on the use of theory

Understanding the TA's position at work was supported by applying Bourdieu's (1991) theory of habitus, where people's behaviour and movement within a network of social relations is structured by their position within social space over time dependent on their possession of capital. Bourdieu's idea allowed me to view how TAs inhabit comparative positions within their social space, enabling the struggles and difficulties within the hierarchical structure of school to become more apparent. It enabled me to articulate how the physical space that TAs inhabit, and how they construct their position within this, is structured by influences such as the cultural, social and economic.

> *'Habitus is a kind of transforming machine that leads us to 'reproduce' the social conditions of our own production, but in a relatively unpredictable way, in such a way that one cannot move simply and mechanically from knowledge of the conditions of production to knowledge of the products,'*
>
> (Bourdieu, 1990c, p.87)

This means that there are forms of constraints and demands that impose themselves on individuals pertaining to their job role, gender and status that they have to adapt to, using the social behaviours they have learnt, and what they do in practice can be said to form their vocational habitus. The habitus:

> *'Is a socialised body. A structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world—a field—and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world.'*
>
> (Bourdieu, 1990a, p.70)

Similarly, the research showed that TAs deployed an informal style of language speaking in a way that is often emotive in nature, a form of communication consistent with their habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). This informal style of language may also confine TAs within their vocational habitus, with the limits they impose on themselves preventing them from moving into another

field (Bourdieu, 1977). I was able to articulate how TAs used an emotional response framed by inhabiting structures that supported a particularly gendered role comparable with Bourdieu's conception of the domestic field. Bourdieu's field reflects how individuals work within their work role, and that will depend on their perceptions of this reality and the fit between their habitus and the social field of the workplace; that is the interaction of different structuring and structured structures (Woolhouse, Dunne and Goddard, 2009). Bourdieu's analogy was then applied to outline the fields that TAs inhabit through their roles at work, this was also evident in the way they were organised and the prescriptive nature of daily activities they were asked to carry out.

Bourdieusian theory was also useful when considering the relative 'powerlessness' of TAs. For example, instances where they saw themselves as not valuable enough to speak out as a result of their habitus (Bourdieu, 1991). Sometimes the TAs were complicit in this powerlessness, not in a conscious or consensual way, but as a result of their habitus: Using Bourdieusian theory (1984) was useful in articulating that the TAs' habitus suggests, because it is rooted in necessity, that they do not value their own input/opinion as highly as that of teachers; an example of this is where the TA had information that may have been useful but 'preferred to keep it to herself, as she 'did not feel it was her place to say anything.' This reluctance to say what they thought to the class teacher, or even the student teachers, is that it is a sign of them adapting, or being limited by, their habitus within the field of the school, recognising that their 'emotional capital', of value in the domestic sphere, is not seen in the same way in the professional one (Reay 2000).

Professionally, as a senior manager, the use of Bourdieusian theory enabled me to theoretically frame the work that the TAs do, therefore, enabling me to have a closer understanding of how

this translates to practice in the school. It gave me an insight into what I could do to address this through the appropriate sessions to support scaffolding appropriate teaching.

Bourdieu is often criticised for having a blind spot with regard to gender, although he did report widely on gender in his book *Masculine Domination* (Bourdieu, 2001), according to Reay (2000), who advocates expanding habitus to include race and gender into small scale research projects in schools.

> *'Habitus is a way of looking at data which renders the 'taken-for-granted' problematic. It suggests a whole range of questions not necessarily addressed in empirical research; How well adapted is the individual to the context they find themselves in? How does personal history shape their responses to the contemporary setting? What subjective vocations do they bring to the present and how are they manifested? Are structural effects visible within small scale interactions? What is the meaning of non-verbal behaviour as well as individuals' use of language? These questions clearly raise issues of gender and 'race' alongside those of social class.'*
>
> (Reay, 1995a, pp.369)

Therefore, this research on TAs is useful in that it has articulated how the female voice, framed within Bourdieu's notion of class and capital, can confine TAs within a specific, gendered habitus. Consequently, recognising how power and identity, framed within Bourdieu's theory, helps us understand the TAs in their role is highly significant in this research.

7.3 Personal research journey

I was aware from the start that there would be numerous challenges to conducting research by working as a member of the SLT in school and as an insider/outsider researcher. The approach I implemented was social-constructionism, where knowledge was constructed between the TAs and myself, this meant, because I was part of the research field, maintaining awareness of my own positionality.

In order to ameliorate anticipated issues I used my research journal to document any issues or difficulties I encountered along the way. This was a useful, clear way of organising my thoughts and grouping possible solutions, reasons for decisions made or ideas together. It supported an iterative approach, any alterations made were conducted using different coloured writing implements and additional sheets of paper, which were carefully numbered and identified.

When planning the research and on reflection, I can see that there were significant benefits from being an insider and conducting the interviews, transcription and respondent checks. It meant that I became very familiar with the data, from the beginning. There were also benefits to being in the room and generating the reflections from each interview as they captured another layer of information that would not have been available to draw from just the audio recordings. Other benefits from being an insider meant that I understood how the systems worked in school and the role each participant played; that I had worked with these individuals for a number of years and knew them very well, when they were at ease, unhappy, excited etc.

However, there were also challenges with being an insider, the power dynamic and the significant challenges surrounding how to minimise this impacting on the proposed research took considerable thought and effort to maintain. Equally, maintaining the trust that I had built up with the TAs over a number of years prior to starting the research required careful planning, so that the power dynamic was addressed as far as was practicable. It was important to me to know that if issues came up during the research that they would be dealt with, explanation and suggestions were offered where the TAs may have shared something potentially contentious.

As the research progressed, being objective and maintaining a professional approach was important, how I reported information required me to undertake a lot of thinking and writing in my journal. I had to ensure that I was very systematic in my approach and made sure that I had all the audit trails clearly organised so that I could refer back to things easily. Addressing

positionality involved a strong focus on reflection and reflexivity, the latter involved looking within consciously and critically at my beliefs, biases, research choices, methodology and interpretation of information. I was aware that it was important that this process was ongoing and that I could justify to 'myself' that I had made the most appropriate choice, my conscience plays a big part in everything I do and my actions have to 'sit right' with me. Being aware of how my perspectives changed over time was important as it has developed my thinking around the methodological choices I made, along with any potential biases or preconceived ideas that I may have held. Professionally, these reflective and reflexive processes are ongoing and the prolonged engagement with the TAs prior to the research benefitted the research process and my relationship with them positively. For example, it is my view that they shared their knowledge with me honestly, including identifying when things were not running as they would have hoped and when they 'got on with things' by solving structural problems behind the scenes or 'managed as best they could.' Their honesty struck me as quite humbling, even when they were saying something about a structure that I had implemented. This research has taught me a lot about managing people supportively and about how frequent, timely communication is so important in supporting people to feel prepared and valued in their role.

The process in this study that were developed to ameliorate research issues of power and positionality drew from Bourdieu's (1993) theory, recognising that being self-reflexive is central to understanding social and cultural structures embedded in the processes and relationships in the research. It was always my aim to view the TAs as central to the research process, never just as participants, as this knowledge could only be created by us working together to construct our understanding of the evidence changes that had been implemented in school.

References

Aguilar, J.L. (1981) Insider research: An ethnography of a debate. In D.A. Messerschmidt (Ed.), *Anthropologists at home in North America* (pp.133-149). London: Cambridge University Press.

Alborz, A., Pearson, D., Farrell, P., and Howes, A. (2009) *The Impact of Adult Support Staff on Pupils and Mainstream Schools*. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families and Institute of Education.

Alexander, R.J. (2004) Still no Pedagogy? principle, pragmatism and compliance in primary education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*. (34)1, pp.7-33.

Alexander, R.J. (2010) Children, Their World, Their Education, Final Report and Recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review, London: Routledge Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

Anderson, G. and Arsenault, N. (2005) *Fundamentals of Education Research*. Routledge

Anney, V.N. (2014) Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies.* (JETERAPS), 5(2), pp. 272-281.

Apple, M.W. (1993) What Post-modernists forget: cultural capital and official knowledge, *Curriculum Studies,* 1(3), pp.301-316.

Barton. L. and Armstrong, F. (2007) *Policy, experience and change: cross-cultural reflections on inclusive education*. Gran Bretaña: Springer.

Atkinson, T. and Claxton, G. (2000) *The intuitive practitioner: on the value of not always knowing what one is doing*. Buckingham, England; Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Atkinson, P., Coffey, A. & Delamont, S. (2001) A debate about our canon. *Qualitative Research*, 1(1), pp.5-21.

Attwood, T. and Bland, K. (2012) Deployment and impact of higher level teaching assistants - how do small scale local studies fit into the bigger picture? (2011) *Management in Education 2*6(2), pp.82-88. [Accessed 14th August, 2017].

Apesoa-Varano, E.C (2007) Educated caring: The Emergence of a Professional Identity Among Nurses. *Qualitative Sociology* 30(3), pp.249–274. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11133-007-9069-6 [Accessed 28th January, 2020]

Bach, S., Kessler, I. and Heron, P. (2006) Changing job boundaries and workforce reform: the case of teaching assistants. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 37(1), pp.2–21.

Ball, S.J. (1990) *Politics and policy making in education: explorations in policy sociology*. London: Routledge.

Ball, S.J. (2003) The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity, *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(2), pp.215-228.

Ball, S.J. (2012) Show Me the Money! Neoliberalism at Work in Education. FORUM, 54(1), pp.23

Ball, S.J. (2013) *Foucault, power, and education*. New York, N.Y: Routledge.

Barker, C. (2008) Cultural Studies: theory and practice (3rd edn). London: Sage.

Barkham, J. (2008) Suitable work for women? Roles, Relationships and Changing Identities of 'Other Adults' in the Early Years Classroom. British Educational Research Journal 34(6), pp.839–853.

Barnes, C. and Mercer, G. and British Association of Social Workers (2006) *Independent Futures: creating user-led disability services in a disabling society*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.

BBC.co.uk. (2015) *BBC NEWS | UK | Education | Teaching assistant controls urged*. [online] Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7462691.stm [Accessed 26th May, 2018].

Belenky, M., Clinchy, B.M., Goldberger, N,R. and Tarule, J.M. (1997) *Women's ways of knowing: the development of self, voice, and mind*. New York. Basic Books.

Bell, J. (2005) *Doing your Research Project: a guide for first-time researchers* in ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Bedford, D., Jackson, C.R. & Wilson, E. (2008) New Partnerships for Learning: Teachers' Perspectives on Their Developing Professional Relationships with Teaching Assistants in England. Journal of In-Service Education, 34(1), pp.7–25.

Biesta, G.J.J. (2010) 'Why 'What Works' Still Won't Work: From Evidence-Based Education to Value-Based Education', *Studies in Philosophy & Education*, 29(5), pp.491-503.

Blatchford, P., Basset, P., Brown, P., Martin, C., Russell, A., Webster, R. and Haywood, N. (2006*) The Deployment and Impact of Support Staff in School. Report on findings from a national questionnaire survey of schools, support staff and teachers*. (Strand 1, Wave 1, 2004). London institute of Education, University of London.

Blatchford, P., Bassett, P*., Brown, P., Koutsoubou, M., Martin, C., Russell, A. and Webster, R., with Rubie-Davies, C. (2009a) The impact of support staff in schools. Results from the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project. (Strand 2 Wave 2).* DCSF Research Report 148 (London, Department for Children, Schools and Families).

Blatchford, P., Basset, P., Brown, P., Martin, C., Russell, A. and Webster, R. (2009d) *Deployment and Impact of Support Staff Project. Research Brief*. DCSF Research Brief 148 (London, Department for Children, Schools and Families).

Blatchford, P., Russell, A. and Webster, R. (2012) *Reassessing the impact of teaching assistants: how research challenges practice and policy*, Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Blatchford, P., Webster. R. and Russell, A. (2012) *Challenging the role and deployment of teaching assistants in mainstream schools: The impact on schools. Final report on the Effective Deployment of Teaching Assistants (EDTA) project.* London: Institute of Education. http://www.schoolsupportstaff.net/edtareport.pdf.

Boaz, A., Grayson, L., Levitt, R. and Solesbury, W. (2008) Does evidence-based policy work. Learning from the UK experience. *Evidence and Policy*: *A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice*. 4(2), pp 233-253.

Bolton, G. (1999) Reflections Through the Looking-glass: the story of a *Course of Writing as a Reflexive Practitioner. Teaching in Higher Education*. 4(2), pp.193-212.

Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J.C. (1977) *Reproduction in education, society and culture*, London: England Sage.

Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste.* London, Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1990a) The logic of practice (Cambridge, Polity Press).

Bourdieu, P. (1990c) Sociology in question (Cambridge, Polity Press).

Bourdieu, P. (1991) Language and Symbolic Power, Polity Press, Oxford.

Bourdieu, P. (1993) *Sociology in Question.* London: Sage.

Bourdieu, P. (2001) Masculine domination (Cambridge, Polity Press).

Braun V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, (online) 3(2), pp.77-101.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2018). *Thematic analysis - an introduction*. *YouTube*. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kv7C53yvLqk. [Accessed 13th October, 2018].

Breen, L.J., (2007) The researcher 'in the middle': Negotiating the insider/outsider dichotomy. *The Australian Community Psychologist,* 19(1), pp.163-174.

Brekhus, W. (1998) A sociology of the unmarked: redirecting our focus, *Sociological Theory,* 16 (1), pp.34-51.

British Education Research Association (BERA) (2011) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational research. Available at www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guidelines/*

Burr, V. (2003) Social Constructionism, Second Edition, Routledge, London.

Butt, G. and A. Lance. (2005) Modernising the roles of support staff in primary schools: changing focus, changing function. *Educational Review* 57(2), pp.139–149.

Butt, G. and Lance, A. (2009) 'I am *not* the teacher!' Some Effects of Remodelling the Roles of Teaching Assistants in English Primary Schools. *Education* 37(3), pp.3-13.

Carr, W. (2006) Education Without Theory, British Journal of Educational Studies. 54(2), pp.136-159.

Davidson G.W., Schwarz, C.M. and Klein V. (1993) *Chambers maxi paperback dictionary.* Edinburgh: Chambers.

Chavez, C., (2008) Conceptualizing from the Inside: Advantages, Complications, and Demands on Insider Positionality. *The Qualitative Report,* 13(3), 474-494. Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR13-3/chavez.pdf [Accessed 30th January, 2020]

Chessum, J. (2015) Guidance on making the best use of TAs. The Link, issue 4.
https://speechandlanguage.info/resources/perch/magazine/thelinkissue4.pdf
[Accessed 30th October, 2017].

Chowdry, H. and Sibieta, L. (2011) *Trends in education and schools spending*. Institute of Fiscal Studies. Briefing Note BN121. Economic and Social Research Council.

Clark, E. (2000) The historical context of research in midwifery. In: Proctor S, and Renfrew M eds. *Linking Research and Practice in Midwifery. A guide to evidence-based practice.* Edinburgh: Bailliere Tindall, pp.35–54.

Clarke, V. & Braun, V. (2012) Teaching thematic analysis; Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. (Online) *The Psychologist*, 26(2), pp.120-123. Available at: https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/937596 [Accessed 31st October, 2018]

Cockroft, C. and Atkinson, C. (2015) Using the Wider Pedagogical Role model to establish learning support assistants' views about facilitators and barriers to effective practice. *Support for Learning*, 30(2), pp.88-104.

Coe, R. (2009) School Improvement: Reality and Illusion. *British Journal of Educational Studies*. 57(4), pp.363-379.

Coe, R. (2013) Inaugural lecture of Professor Robert Coe Director of CEM and Professor of Education at the School of Education. Improving Education: *A triumph of hope over experience*.
Available at: http://www.cem.org/attachments/publications/ImprovingEducation2013.pdf.
[Accessed 28th October, 2015].

Cohen, L. Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2010) (6th edn). *Research methods in education*. Abingdon. Routledge.

Collins, J. and Simco, N. (2006) Teaching Assistants Reflect: The Way Forward? 7(2), pp.197-214. (Accessed 14th August, 2017).

Connell, R., Fawcett, B. and Meagher, G. (2009) Neoliberalism, New Public Management and the human service professions. *Journal of Sociology,* 45(4), pp.331-338.

Connelly, M.F. and Clandinin, D.J. (1990). Stories of experiences and narrative enquiry. Educational Researcher, 19(5), pp.2-14.

Cooke, G. and Lawton. K. (2008) For Love or Money: Pay, Progression and Professionalization in the 'Early Years' Workforce. Available at: www.ippr.org [Accessed 30th January. 2020].

Cook-Jones, A. (2006) The changing role of teaching the assistant in the primary school sector. Paper presented at the European Conference on Educational Research, Geneva 13-16 September.

Costley, C., Elliott, G. and Gibbs, P. (2010) Doing work based research: approaches to inquiry for insider-researchers. Los Angeles: Sage.

Creemers, B.P.M. (1994) *The effective classroom*. London, UK: Cassell.

Cremin, H., Thomas, G. and Vincett, K. (2005) Working with Teaching Assistants: three models evaluated, *Research Papers in Education*, 20(4), pp.413–432.

Creswell, J.W. (2003) *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*, (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J.W. (2007) *Qualitative Inquiry and research Design: 2nd* edn. London: university Tutorial Press.

Cresswell J.W. and Plano Clark V.L. (2011) Designing and conducting mixed method research. 2nd Sage; Thousand Oaks.

Cutcliffe, J.R. and McKenna, H.P. (1999) Establishing the credibility of qualitative research findings: the plot thickens. *Journal of Advanced nursing*, 30(2), pp.374-380.

Dabell, J. (2019) How the Best Schools Use Teaching Assistants – Third Space Learning (online) Third Space Learning. Available at: https://thirdspacelearning.com/blog/how-the-best-schools-use-teaching-assistants-effectively/ [Accessed 23rd July, 2019].

Damaske, S. (2011) *For the Family*?: how class and gender shape women's work. New York: Oxford University Press.
Davies, B. (2003) Death to Critique and Dissent? The Policies and Practices of New Managerialism and of 'Evidence-based Practice'. *Gender and Education*, 15(1), pp.91–103.

Denzin, N., (1989a) *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*. (3rd edn.) New Jersey, Prentice Hall.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S (Eds.). (2005) The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research (3rd edn). Sage Publications Ltd.

Denzin, N.K, and Lincoln, Y.S. (2013) The Landscape of Qualitative Research (4th edn). Los Angeles, Sage.

DeLyser, D, (2001) 'Do you really live here?' Thoughts on Insider Research. *Geographical Review,* 91(1-2), pp.441-453.

DfE (Department for Education) (1998) Teachers: meeting the challenge of change. https://webrchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070108135418/http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/educationoverview/briefing/strategyarchive/teachingreforms/

DfE (Department for Education) (2010) www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-support-staff-topic-paper Ref: DFE-RTP-10-001 [Accessed 20th February, 2018].

DfE (Department for Education) (2011) Teacher's Standards; Guidance for School Leaders, School Staff and Governing Bodies (July). REF: DFE-00066-2011. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards [Accessed 10th March, 2019].

DfE (Department for Education) & DoH (Department of Health) 2014 Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25 years [online at] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf

DfE (Department for Education) & DoH (Department of Health) (2015) Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25 years [online at] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf

DfE (Department for Education) (2016) Statistics: school workforce 22 June 2017 (SFR 25/2017). London: Department for Education. www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/620825/SFR25_2017MainText.pdf [Accessed 20th February, 2018].

DfE (Department for Education) (2019) Deployment of Teaching Assistants in Schools June 2019 Research Report. Skipp, A and Hopwood, V. ASK research. Reference DFE - RR939 [Accessed 5th January, 2020].

Department of Education and Science (1978) *Special Educational Needs: Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People.* Cmnd.7212, London: HMSO. *(The Warnock Report).*

Department for Education and Skills (1998), The national literacy strategy, London: DfES.

Department for Education and Skills (1999), The national numeracy strategy, London: DfES.

Department for Education and Skills (2000a), Guidance on Working with Teaching Assistants. London: HMSO

Department for Education and Skills (2002), Time for standards: reforming the school workforce. (London: Department for Education and Skills).

Department for Education and Skills (2003) *Raising Standards and Tackling Workload: a national agreement* (London: Department for Education and Skills).

Deployment and Impact of Support Staff research summary:
www.ioe.ac.uk/diss_research_summary.pdf

DeSantis, L. and Ugarriza, D.N (2000) The concept of theme as used in qualitative nursing research. *Western Journal of Nursing Research,* 22(3), pp.351-372.

Devecchi, C. and Rouse, M. (2010) An Exploration of the Features of Effective Collaboration Between Teachers and Teaching Assistants in Secondary Schools. Support for Learning, 25(2), pp.91–99.

Dewey, J. (1933) *How we think:* A Restatement of the Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process. Boston, MA: D.C. Heath & Co Publishers.

Dibley, L. (2011) Analysing narrative data using McCormack's lenses. *Nurse Researcher,* 18(3), pp.13-19.

Dixon, A. (2003) Teaching assistants: whose definition? *FORUM*, 45(1), pp.26–29.

Drury, E. (2013) *'Phasing out teaching assistants is like axing all nurses from the NHS.'* [online].http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/jun/07/phasing-out-teaching-assistants-schools [Accessed 17th February, 2018]

Dunne, L., Goddard, G. and Woodhouse. C. (2008) 'Teaching assistants' perceptions of their professional role and their experiences of doing a foundation degree', *Improving Schools*, 11(3), 239-249.

Ebersold, S. (2003) Inclusion and Mainstream Education: an Equal Cooperation System, *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 18(1), pp.89-107.

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/pdf/generate/?u=https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/pdf/toolkit/?id=149&t=Teaching%20and%20Learning%20Toolkit&e=149&s=
[Accessed 10th March, 2019].

EEF TA project research (effective interventions)
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/reports/#search
[Accessed 10th March, 2019].

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Annual_Reports/EEF_Attainment_Gap_Report_2018.pdf [Accessed 11th September, 2018].

Elliott, J. (1996) Quality Assurance, the Educational Standards Debate, and the Commodification of Educational Research, Paper presented at the BERA Annual Conference, University of Lancaster.

Elliott, J. (2005) Using Narrative in Social Research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches. Sage: London.

Emira, M. (2011) I am more than just a TA! *Management in Education*. 25(4) pp.163–174.

Farr, M.J. (2012) The Long-term Retention of Knowledge and Skills: A cognitive and instructional perspective. Springer-Verlag. New York.

Farrell, P., Alborz, A., Howes, A. and Pearson, D. (2010) The impact of teaching assistants on improving pupils' academic achievement in mainstream schools: a review of the literature', *Educational Review,* 62 (4), pp.435–448.

Finlay L. (2008) A dance between the Reduction and Reflexivity: Explicating the "Phenomenological Psychological Attitude". *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology,* 39(1), pp.1-32.

Foucault, M. (2010b) *The government of the self and others: lectures at the College de France 1982-1983*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Gall, M.D., Gall, J.P. and Borg, W.R. (2003) *Educational research: an introduction.* Boston, Allyn And Bacon.

Gay, L.R., Mills, G.E. and Airasian, P.W. (2014) *Educational research: competencies for analysis and applications.* Boston: Pearson.

Gerber, S.B., Finn, J.D., Achilles, C.M. and Boyd-Zacharias, J. (2001) 'Teacher aides and students' academic achievement', *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 23(2), pp.123-143.

Gerschel, L. (2005) 'The special educational needs coordinator's role in managing teaching assistants: the Greenwich perspective.' *Support for Learning*, 20(2), pp.69–76.

Giangreco, M.F. and Doyle, M.B. (2007) Teaching assistants in inclusive schools, in L. Florian (Ed.) *The Sage Handbook of Special Education* (London: Sage).

Giangreco, M,F. Smith, C,S. and Pickney, E. (2006) Addressing the Paraprofessional Dilemma in an Inclusive School: A Program Description. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*. 31(3), pp.215-229.

Giangreco, M.F., Suter, J.C and Hurley, S.M (2011) Revisiting Personnel Utilization in Inclusion-Oriented Schools. *The Journal of Special Education*, 47(2), pp.121-132.

Giangreco, M.F., Yuan, S., McKenzie, B., Cameron, P. and Fialka, J. (2005) ''Be careful what you wish for . . .'' Five reasons to be concerned about the assignment of individual paraprofessionals', *Teaching Exceptional Children,* 37(5), pp.28-34.

Gilligan C. (2003) In a Different Voice. Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England.

Glazzard, J. (2011) Perceptions of the Barriers to Effective Inclusion in One Primary School: Voices of Teachers and Teaching Assistants. *Support for Learning*. 26 (2), pp.56-63.

Goffman, E. (1959) The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. London: Penguin.

Goldacre, B. (2016) Ban academics talking to ministers? We should train them to do it. Times Higher Education. https://www.timeshighereducation.com/comment/ban-academicsttalking-to-ministers-we-should-train-them-to-do-it. 7 March. [Accessed 20th March, 2016].

Goodley, D. (2007) Towards socially just pedagogies: Deleuzogguattarian critical disability studies. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 11(3), pp.317–334.

Equality and Human Rights Commission (2009) *Staying on* (London, Author).

Great Schools Partnership (2013) *Evidence-Based Definition*. [online] The Glossary of Education Reform. Available at: http://edglossary.org/evidence-based/. pp.1 [Accessed 7th July, 2016].

Greene, M.J. (2014) On the Inside Looking In: Methodological Insights and Challenges in Conducting Qualitative Insider Research. *The Qualitative Report, How To Article*, [Online] 19(15), pp.1–13. Available at: http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR19/greene15.pdf [Accessed 7th May, 2016].

Guba, E.G. (1990) *The paradigm dialogue.* Newbury Park, Calif: Sage.

Gunter, H. (2007) "Remodelling the School Workforce in England: a study in tyranny" *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies* 5(1), pp.1-11 [Accessed 26th February, 2018].

Gunter, H. M. (2013) On not researching school leadership: the contribution of S.J. Ball. *London Review of Education,* 11(3), pp.218–228, [Accessed 22nd February, 2018].

Hall, K. (2013) Effective literacy teaching in the early years of school. In J. Larsen and J. Marsh. (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of early childhood literacy* (pp.523-540) London: Sage**.**

Hammersley, M. (1995) Theory and evidence in qualitative research. *Quality and Quantity*, 29(1) pp.55-66. [Accessed 10th February, 2019].

Hammersley, M. (2001) 'Some questions about evidence-based practice in education.' Paper presented at the 'Evidence-based practice in education' symposium at the Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association, September 13-15. 2001. [Accessed 14th August 2017]. http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00001819.htm

Hammersley, M. (2003) *Systematic or unsystematic, Is that the question?* Some reflections on the science, art, and politics of reviewing research evidence. Paper presented at the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, University of Leicester, UK, February.

Hammersley, M. (2008) Paradigm war revived? On the diagnosis of resistance to randomized controlled trials and systematic review in education. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*. 31(1), pp.3-10.

Hammersley, M. (2010) Reproducing or constructing? Some questions about transcription in social research. *Qualitative Research*, 10(5), pp.553–569.

Hammersley-Fletcher, L. and Lowe, M. (2011) From general dogsbody to whole-class delivery – the role of the primary school teaching assistant within a moral maze. *Management in Education*, 25(2), pp.78–81.

Hammett, N., and Burton, N. (2005) Motivation, Stress and Learning Support Assistants: An Examination of Staff Perceptions at a Rural Secondary School. School Leadership and Management, 25(3), pp.299-310.

Hancock, R. & Collins, J. (2005) Primary Teaching Assistants: Learners and Learning. London: Content

Hanushek, E.A. (2006) School resources. In E.A Hanushek & F. Welch (Eds.), Handbook of the Economics of Education. pp.865-908. Amsterdam, Netherlands: North Holland.

Hart. P. (2002). Narrative, knowing, and emerging methodologies in environmental education research. Canadian Journal of Environmental Education, 7(2), pp.140-165.

Hattie, J. (2012) *Studyguide for Visible Learning: A synthesis or over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement.* London Content Technologies.

Hawthorn, K. (2013) *Outline the concepts of habitus and social field in Bourdieu's Sociology. How valuable are these concepts for the sociological analysis of social life?*. [online] Kirsty Hawthorn. Available at: https://kirstyahawthorn.wordpress.com/sociology-2/outline-the-concepts-of-habitus-and-social-field-in-bourdieus-sociology-how-valuable-are-these-concepts-for-the-sociological-analysis-of-social-life/ [Accessed 31st January, 2018].

Higgins, S., Katsipataki, M., Kokotsaki, D., Coleman, R., Major, L.E., and Coe, R. (2013) *The Sutton Trust-Education Endowment Foundation Teaching and Learning Toolkit*. London: Education Endowment Foundation. Available online at http:/educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Teaching_Assistants_Toolkit_References.pdf [Accessed 26th January, 2020]

Hislop, E. (2003) Read Me First for a User's Guide to Qualitative Research Janice M Morse Read Me First for a User's Guide to Qualitative ResearchandLynRichards Sage262£23 (paperback) 07619184140761918414. *Nurse Researcher*, 10(2), pp.85–86.

Hitchcock, G. and Hughes, D. (1989) *Research and the Teacher*: (*a qualitative introduction to schoolbased research*). London: Routledge.

Hochschild, A.R. (1979) Emotion Work, Feeling Rules and Social Structure, *American Journal of Sociology*, 85(3), pp.551–575.

Hochschild, A.R. (1983) *The managed heart: the commercialization of human feeling* (Berkeley, CA University of California Press).

Hopkins, R.M., Regehr, G, and Pratt, D.D. (2016). A framework for negotiating positionality in phenomenological research. *Medical Teacher*, 39(1), pp.20–25.

Hutchings, M., Seeds, K., Coleman, N., Harding, C., Mansaray, A., Maylor, U., Minty, S., Pickering, E. (2009), Aspects of School Workforce Remodelling. Strategies used and the impact on Workload and Standards, DCSF-RR153 Available online at www.education.gov.uk [Accessed 17 February 2018].

Ioannidis, J.P.A (2005) Why Most Published Research Findings Are False. PloS Med, 2(8), e124. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.0020124

Kerry, T. (2005) 'Towards a typology for conceptualising the roles of teaching assistants'. Educational Review, 57(3), 373–384. [Accessed 15th August, 2017].

King, N. (2004) Using templates in the thematic analysis of text. In Cassell, C. and Symon, G. Eds., Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research, Sage, London pp.256-270.

Knights, D. and Willmott, H. (2004) *Management lives: Power and identity in work organizations*. London: Sage.

Kvale, S. (1996) InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative research Interviewing. Thousand Oaks, CA: sage Publications.

Larrivee, B. (2008) Development of a tool to assess teachers' level of reflective practice, *Reflective Practice*, 9(3-4), pp.341-360.

Lather, P. (2006) Paradigm proliferation as a good thing to think with: teaching research in education as a wild profusion. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19(1), pp.35-57.

Leach, T. (2009) Maybe I can fly: nurturing personal and collective learning in professional learning communities. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 27(4), pp.313–323.

LeCompte, M.D. and Goetz, J.P. (1982) Problems of Reliability and Validity in Ethnographic Research. *Review of Educational Research*. 52(1), pp.31-60.

Legislation.gov.uk (2014) *Children and Families Act, 2014.* [online]
Available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk./ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted.

Lehane, T. (2015) "Cooling the mark out": experienced teaching assistants' perceptions of their work in the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream secondary schools. *Educational Review*, (online) 68(1), pp.4–23. Available at: http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/4125/1/Lehane13EdD.pdf [Accessed 14th August, 2017].
Needham. R. and Lévi-Strauss, C. (1967) The Savage Mind (la pensée sauvage). Man, 2)2), pp.315.

Lincoln, Y. and Guba, E.G. (1985) *Naturalistic enquiry*. Beverley Hills, CA: Sage.

Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. (1986) But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New directions for program evaluation*, 1986(30), pp.73-84).

MacIntyre, A.C. (2011). *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. London: Bloomsbury.

Mackenzie, S. (2011) 'Yes, but ...': rhetoric, reality and resistance in teaching assistants' experiences of inclusive education. *Support for Learning.* 26(2), pp.64-71. [Accessed 15th August, 2017].

Maguire, M. and Ball, S.J. (1994) "Discourses in Educational Reform in the United Kingdom and the USA and the Work of Teachers." *British Journal of in-Service Education*, 20(1), pp.5–16.

Maguire, M. and Delahunt, B. (2017) Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *AISHE-J: The All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, [online] 9(3). Available at: http://ojs.aishe.org/index.php/aishe-j/article/view/335 [Accessed 29th January, 2020].

Maher, A.J. and Vickerman P. (2018) Ideology influencing action: special educational needs co-ordinator and learning support assistant role conceptualisations and experiences of special needs education in England. *Journal of Special Educational Needs*, 18(1), pp.15-24.

Malterud, K. (2001) "Qualitative research: standards, challenges and guidelines." *The Lancet* (online) 358(9280) pp.483-488. Available at:
https://mef.med.ufl.edu/files/2009/03/qualitative-research.pdf [Accessed 29th January, 2020].

Mansaray, A., (2006) Liminality and In/Exclusion: Exploring the Work of Teaching Assistants. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society.* 14(2), pp.171-187.

Marx, K. (1976) Capital: A Critique of Political Economy (Translated by Ben Fowkes). London: Penguin Books.

Maximising the impact of TAs.
http://maximisingtas.co.uk/research/the-diss-project.php [Accessed 24th January, 2020].

McDonnell, P. (2003) Developments in special education in Ireland: deep structures and policy making. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 7(3), pp.259–269.

McGinn, K, L., and Oh, E. (2017) Gender, social class and women's employment. *Current Opinion in Psychology* [online] 2017 (18), pp.84–88. Available at: http://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Publication%20Files/McGinnOh_GenderSocialClass_COPSYC_495_2017080 01331892896_75165458-c7d9-495a-b87b-cc77fe85ded1.pdf [Accessed 30st January, 2018].

Mezirow, J. (1990) Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: a guide to transformative and emancipatory learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Milner, A. (2008) *The effective deployment of Classroom Assistants in support of the National Numeracy Framework*. Milton Keynes, UK: Open University. Unpublished EdD thesis.

Moyles, J. (2001) Passion, Paradox and Professionalism in Early Years Education, *Early Years*, 21(2), pp.81-95.

Murray, J. (2012) Performativity cultures and their effects on teacher educators' work. *Research in Teacher Education*, 2(2), pp.19-23.

National Assembly for Wales, *Enterprise and Learning Committee Implementation of the Teacher Workload Agreement (*2009).

NASEN, (2014) Effective adult support. A quick guide to maximizing the impact of teaching assistants and other adults. Available at: https://nasen.org.uk/uploads/assets/ad672d20-d3d6-41b4-824add1114633c03/effective-adult-support.pdf [Accessed 30th January 2017].

Neaum, S. (2014) *Continuing Professional Development for Teaching Assistants: encouraging competence or ensuring performance?*. Paper presented at TACTYC 2014, Birmingham, United Kingdom.

NEU (National Education Union) (2019) Support staff pay and conditions [online] Available at: https://neu.org.uk/advice/support-staff-pay-and-conditions (Accessed 24.1.2020).

Noddings, N. (1993) Caring: A feminist perspective, in: K, A., Strike & P, L., Ternasky (Eds.), *Ethics for professionals in education: Perspectives for preparation and practice* (pp.43-53). New York: Teachers College Press.

Nowell, L.S., Norris, J.M., White D.E, and Moules, N.J. (2017) Thematic Analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16, pp-1-13. [Accessed 10th September, 2018].

O'Brien, T. and Garner, P. (eds.) (2001) *Untold Stories: Learning Support Assistants and Their Work*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

Office for National Statistics. https://visual.ons.gov.uk/explore-the-gender-pay-gap-and-test-your-knowledge/. Explore the pay gap by profession. [Accessed 4th February, 2018].

Office for Standards in Education (2004) *Remodelling the school workforce: Phase 1* (London, Office for Standards in Education).

Office for Standards in Education (2007) *Reforming and Developing the School Workforce,* Ref. 070020, available at

http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7084/1/Reforming%20and%20developing%20the%20school%20workforce%20%28PDF%20format%29.pdf [Accessed 25th February, 2018].

O'Reilly, J., Smith, M., Deakin S. and Burchell, B (2015) Equal Pay as a Moving Target: International perspectives on forty years of addressing the gender pay gap. Cambridge journal of Economics. 39(2), pp.299-317.

Osgood, J. (2005) Who cares? The classed nature of childcare, *Gender and Education*, 17(3), pp.289-303.
Osgood, J. (2006) Professionalism and performativity: the feminist challenge facing early years practitioners, *Early Years*, 26(2), pp.187-199.

Ozga, J. (2000). Policy research in educational settings: Contested terrain. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Packer, N. (2015) Supporting Teachers to be Accountable for the Effective Use of TAs
http://www.nasen.org.uk/utilities/download.FD8B00E0-07C3-4075-8729736C60AFDC16.html
[Accessed 17th June, 2019].

Padgett, D. (1998) *Qualitative methods in social work research: Challenges and Rewards*. (Sage sourcebooks for the human services series; Vol. v. 36). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Parker, M. and Townsend, M. (2005) It's What I do Already: Becoming a Higher Level Teaching Assistant. British Educational Research Association Conference. University of Glamorgan, September, Glamorgan.

Patton M.Q. (2002) Qualitative research and evaluation methods. 3rd Sage Publications; Thousand Oaks.

Phillimore, J., Humphris, R., Klass, F. and Knecht, M. (2016) Bricolage: potential as a conceptual tool for understanding access to welfare in superdiverse neighbourhoods. 10.13140/RG.2.1.4581.5284.
[Accessed 29th January, 2020].

Piggott, T.D., Valentine, J.C., Polanin, J.R., Williams, R.T, and Canada, D.D. (2013) Outcome-Reporting Bias in Educational Research. *Educational Researcher*, 42(8), pp.424-432.

Pricewaterhouse Cooper (2001) Teacher workload study. A report of a review commissioned by the DfES. London: Pricewaterhouse Cooper.

Radford, J., Blatchford, P. and Webster, R. (2011) Opening up and closing down: How teachers and TAs manage turn-taking, topic and repair in mathematics lessons. *Learning and Instruction*, 21(5), pp.625-635.

Radford, J., Bosanquet, P., Webster, R., and Blatchford, P. (2015) Scaffolding learning for independence: Clarifying teacher and teaching assistant roles for children with special educational needs. *Learning & Instruction*, [Online] 36, pp.1-10. Available at:
http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1476330/1/Radford%20Scaffolding%20roles%20for%20TAs%20FINAL%20AUTHOR%20pdf.pdf [Accessed 15th August, 2017].

Ratcliffe, R. (2014) Ofsted inspections and targets harming teachers' mental health, finds survey. [online] The Guardian. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/apr/14/ofsted-inspections-targets-harming-teachers-mental-health [Accessed 28th February, 2018].

Reay, D. (1995a) Using habitus to look at 'race' and class in primary school classrooms, in: M. Griffiths & B. Troyna (Eds) Anti-racism, culture and social justice in education (Stoke-on-Trent, Trentham Books), pp.115-132.

Reay, D. (2000) 'Gendering Bourdieu's concept of capitals? Emotional capital, women and social class.' In Adkins, L and Skeggs, B. Feminism after Bourdieu. Oxford. Blackwell.

Robson, C. (1993) *Real World Research*. (Third Edition) Oxford: Blackwell.

Roffey-Barentsen, J. (2014) The Voices of Teaching Assistants (Are we Value for Money?) *Research in Education*. 92(1), pp.18-31.

Rubie-Davies, C.M., Blatchford, P., Webster, R., Koutsoubou, M., and Bassett, P. (2010) *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*. Enhancing learning? A comparison of teacher and teaching assistant interactions with pupils. 21(4), pp.429-449.

Russell, A., Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., Brown, P. and Martin, C. (2005) The views of teaching assistants in English key stage 2 classes on their role, training and job satisfaction, *Educational Research*, 47(2), pp.175-189.

Russell, A. Webster, R. and Blatchford, P. (2013) *Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants: Guidance for School Leaders and Teachers.* Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Ryan, F., Coughlan, M. and Cronin, P. (2007) Step-by-step guide to critiquing research. Part 2: Qualitative Research. *British Journal of Nursing*, 16(12), pp.738-744.

School Support Staff Pay Body Abolished. (2010) *BBC News* (online) 28th Oct. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-11642376 [Accessed 25th February, 2018].

Schutz, A. (1962) The Problem of Social Reality: Collected Papers I. The Hague: Martinus Nijhof.

Schwandt. T.A. Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. (2007) Judging interpretations: But is it rigorous? trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation,* 2007(114), pp.11-25.

Seligman, M.E. and Maier, S.F. (1967) failure to escape traumatic shock. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 74(1), pp.1-9.

Sharples, J. Webster, R. and Blatchford, P. (2015) Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants. Education Endowment Foundation.

Sikes, P. Lawson, H. and Parker M. (2007) Voices on: teacher and teaching assistants talk about inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 11(3), pp.355-370.

Skidmore, D. (2004) Inclusion: The Dynamic of School Development. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Slavin, R. and Smith, D (2009) the relationship between sample sizes and effect sizer in systematic reviews in education. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 31(4), pp.500-506.

Smith, J.K. (1983) Quantitative Versus Qualitative Research: An attempt to clarify the issue. *Educational Researcher,* 12(3), pp.6-13.

Smith, P., Whitby, K and Sharp, C. (2004) 'The employment and deployment of teaching assistants.' Slough: National Foundation for Educational research.

Starks, H. and Brown Trinidad, S. (2007) Choose Your Method: A Comparison of Phenomenology, Discourse Analysis, and Grounded Theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10), pp.1372-1380.

Steiber, N., Berghammer, C. and Haas, B. (2015) Contextualizing the Education Effect on Women's Employment: A Cross-National Comparative Analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 78(1), pp.246-261.

Teesside University (2020) Research Governance / Research /Teesside University (online) Tees.ac.uk. Available at https://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/research/ethics.cfm [Accessed 31 January, 2020].

The Boston Consulting Group (2012). The Sutton Group. *Premium Policies: What schools and teachers believe will improve standards for poorer pupils and those in low-attaining schools*. [online] Available at: https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/1suttontrustbcgeefreport.pdf [Accessed 28th October, 2015].

Thomas, G. (2007) Education and Theory: Strangers in Paradigms. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Turner, D.W. (2010) Qualitative Interview Design: A Practical Guide for Novice Investigators. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(3), pp.754-760. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol15/iss3/19

Tucker, S. (2009) Perceptions and reflections on the role of the teaching assistant in the classroom environment. *Pastoral Care in Education.* 2(4), pp.291–300.

UNISON (2007) School Remodelling - The Impact on Support Staff: A report on roles, deployment pay and training, London: UNISON.

Van Teijlingen, E.R, Rennie, A.M., Hundley, V. and Graham, W. (2001) The importance of conducting and reporting pilot studies: the example of the Scottish Births Survey, *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 34(3), pp. 289-295.

Vincent, C. and Braun, A. (2010) 'And Hairdressers are Quite Seedy …': The Moral Worth of Childcare Training. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 11(2), pp.203–214.

Vincent, C. and Braun, A. (2011) 'I think a lot of it is common sense. …' Early years students, professionalism and the development of a 'vocational habitus', *Journal of Education Policy*, 26(6), pp.771-785.

Vincent, C. and Braun, A. (2013) Being 'fun' at work: emotional labour, class, gender and childcare. *British Educational Research Journal,* 39(4), pp.751–768.

Vogt, F. (2002) A caring teacher: Explorations into primary school teachers' professional identity and ethic of care, *Gender and Education*, 14(3), pp.251-264.

WAMG (2008) The appropriate deployment of support staff in schools, WAMG Note 22, London: WAMG available at https://www.atl.org.uk/Images/WAMG22%20(Deployment%20of%20support%20staff).pdf [Accessed 25th February, 2018].

Watson, D., Bayliss, P. and Pratchett, G. (2013). Pond life that 'know their place': exploring teaching and learning support assistants' experiences through positioning theory, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 26(1), pp.100-117.

Webb, J. Schirato, T. and Danaher, G. (2002) *Understanding Bourdieu*. London: SAGE Publications.

Webster, R. (2014) Code of Practice: How research evidence on the role and impact of teaching assistants can inform professional practice', *Educational Psychology and Practice*, 30(3), pp.232-237.

Webster, R., and Blatchford, P. (2012) Supporting Learning?: How effective are teaching assistants?, in P. Ady. and J, Dillon. (Eds) *Bad educational: Debunking educational myths*, Maidenhead: OUP. Available online at: http://maximisingtas.co.uk/research/the-edta-project.php.

Webster, R. and Blatchford, P. (2013) The educational experiences of pupils with a Statement for special educational needs in mainstream primary schools: results from a systematic observation study', *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, (28)4, pp.463-479. [Accessed 14th August, 2017].

Webster, R., Blatchford, P. and Russell, A (2012) The guide on the side: Realising the value of teaching assistants. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Webster, R. and Blatchford, P. (2015) Worlds apart? The nature and quality of the educational experiences of pupils with a Statement for special educational needs in mainstream primary schools', *British Educational Research Journal*. 41(2), pp.324-342. [Accessed 15th July, 2017].

Webster, R., Blatchford, P., Bassett, P, Brown, P., Martin, C. & Russell. A. (2011) The wider pedagogical role of teaching assistants. *School Leadership & Management,* 31(1), pp.3-20. [Accessed 11th June, 2017].

Webster, R. Russell, A. and Blatchford, P. (2016) Maximising the impact of teaching assistants, guidance for school leaders and teachers, Second Edition, London. Routledge.

Weiler, K. (1988) *Women teaching for change: gender, class & power*. South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey Publishers.
Wilson, E. & Bedford, D. (2008) 'New Partnerships for Learning': teachers and teaching assistants working together in schools – the way forward, Journal of Education for Teaching, 34(2), pp.137-150.

Wilson, R. Sharp, C. Shuayb, M. Kendall, L. Wade, P. & Easton, C. (2007) *National Foundation for Educational Research into the deployment and impact of support staff who have achieved HLTA status Final Report*. [online] Available at:
https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED502436.pdf [Accessed 18th August, 2017].

Wilson, V., Schlapp, U. and Davidson, J. (2003) An "An extra Pair of Hands"?: Managing Classroom Assistants in Scottish Primary Schools. *Educational Management & Administration,* 31(2), pp.189-205.

Woods, J. Hammersley-Fletcher, L., and Cole, M. (2009) 'Teaching assistants in schools - some reflections on their changing roles.' Paper presented at the annual conference of the British Educational Research Association, University of Manchester, 2-5 September.

Woolfson, R.C, & Truswell, E. (2005) Do classroom assistants work? *Educational Research*, 47(1), pp.63-75.

Woolhouse, C., Dunne, L. and Goddard. G. (2009) Lifelong learning: teaching assistants' experiences of economic, social and cultural change following completion of a foundation degree, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 28(6), pp.763-776, [Accessed 31th October, 2018].

Wren, A. (2017) Understanding the role of the Teaching Assistant: comparing the views of pupils with SEN and TAs within mainstream Primary schools. *Support for Learning*, 32(1), pp.4-19.

Yeates, N. (2005) A Global Political Economy of Care, *Social Policy and Society*, 4(2), pp.227– 234.

Abbreviations

ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
BRP	Better Reading Partnership
CEM	Centre of Education and Monitoring
CPD	Continual Professional Development
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department of Education and Skills
DoH	Department of Health
DHT	Deputy Head Teacher
DISS	Deployment and Impact of Support Staff
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EDTA	Effective Deployment of Teaching Assistants
EEF	Education Endowment Foundation
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
GLD	Good Level of Development
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IMPACT	Interventions, Make, Prepare, Ask, Change, Training
KS1	Key Stage 1
KS2	Key Stage 2
LEA	Local Education Authority
MITA	Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants
NFER	National Foundation of Educational Research
NPfL	New Partnership for Learning
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
NS-SEC	National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification
PD	Professional Development
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
RQT	Recently Qualified Teacher
SENCO	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SSSNB	School Support Staff Negotiating Body
TA	Teaching Assistant
T4W	Talk for Writing
WAMG	Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group
WPR	Wider Pedagogical Role

Tables

Figures

Appendix 1

Survey questions on deployment - Monday 23.1.2017

13 TA responses – others not filled in enough to add to total number

Working in the classroom (to be completed by teachers and TAs)

Q1	*During a typical school week, estimate the proportion on time (as a %) that you spend doing the following. Only provide a percentage score for item 6 if you are a TA. Ensure that your percentages add up to 100%*	%
1	Working with a pupil one-to-one	25
2	Working with a small group (up to 5 pupils)	22
3	Working with a larger group (between 6 and ten pupils)	14
4	Roving the classroom	13
5	Leading the class	21
6	*(TAs only)* Listening to teacher talk to the class	5
7	Oher (please specify)	0
	Total of 10 responses – the other 3 did not add up to 100%	100%

Q2	*During a typical school week, estimate the proportion on time (as a %) that you spend doing the following. Ensure that your percentages add up to 100%*	%
1	Supporting higher-attaining pupils	12
2	Supporting average-attaining pupils	14
3	Supporting lower-attaining pupils	28
4	Supporting pupils identified as having SEN (e.g. those with a Statement of EHCP)	34
5	Supporting mixed attainment groups	12
	Total of 12 responses – the other 1 did not add up to 100%	100%

Working away from the classroom (to be completed by TAs only)

Q3	*During a typical school week, estimate the proportion on time (as a %) that you spend doing the following. Ensure that your percentages add up to 100%*	%
1	Working with a pupil one-to-one (e.g. leading an intervention)	44
2	Working with a group of pupils (leading an intervention)	23
3	Working with pupil(s) in a pastoral/welfare context (e.g. mentoring, physio)	11
4	Preparing, planning and/or assessing pupil work (including for interventions)	9
5	Doing administrative tasks (e.g. photocopying or filing for teachers; display)	8
6	Other (please specify	5
	Total of 11 responses – the other 2 did not add up to 100%	100%

Q4	*During a typical school week, estimate the proportion on time (as a %) that you spend doing the following. Ensure that your percentages add up to 100%*	%
1	Supporting higher-attaining pupils	10
2	Supporting average-attaining pupils	16
3	Supporting lower-attaining pupils	32
4	Supporting pupils identified as having SEN (e.g. those with a Statement of EHCP)	27
5	Supporting mixed attainment groups	15
	Total of 11 responses – the other 2 did not add up to 100%	100%

Appendix 2

Pilot of initial HLTA and TA perspectives on liaison time with teachers

Semi-Structured Interviews

Q1. **How do you feel about the idea of liaison time?**

Q2. **How would you feel liaison time can support you prior to lessons coming up?**

Q3. **How do you share information with the class teacher about what you have done during a particular session/day?**

Q4. **Do you feel that you have enough preparation time?**

Q5. **How would it help if you got planning in advance?**

Q6. **Are you helped to develop skills and confidence through training?**

Q7. **When working with teachers are your views/opinions listened to and taken into account when decisions are being made?**

Q8. **How are you encouraged to participate through liaison time with teachers?**

Q9. **How confident do you feel about teaching the range of interventions you currently deliver?**

Q10. **Do you regularly have feedback or liaison time with teachers and other support staff after the session?**

Q11. **Is there anything else you would like to change in order to support your needs with liaison time?**

Appendix 3

Concept Board

22/8/2017

- Thinking back to the concept board that I created
- What research has been carried out on Teaching Assistants working in the UK?
- What are the keywords and key concepts?
- How do they perceive liaison time?
- What do they think about their role?
- What are their views?

Concept 1	Concept 2	Concept 3	Concept 4
Teaching Assistants	Perspectives	Liaison	UK

Concept 1	Concept 2	Concept 3	Concept 4
Classroom Assistants	Ideas	feedback	United Kingdom
Classroom Support	Thoughts	discussion	British Isles
1:1	Feelings	peer support	England
One to One	Experiences	implementation	Scotland
Paraprofessionals	Feedback	support	Wales
Adult support	Views	organisation	Specific councils
Class based support		organization	Primary school
Learning support			Primary education

Appendix 4

Recommendations for improving the IMPACT of TAs

I provide **Interventions** with clear planning, resources and expected outcomes.

M **Make** links between intervention work and classroom based learning.

P **Prepare** TAs for the content of lessons, what they need to know and what they need to do.

A **Ask** for feedback about the progress of children against the intended outcomes.

C **Change** classroom practice so the TAs are not always supporting the lower attaining pupils.

T Provide **Training** in delivering interventions and pedagogical classroom practice.

(Chessum, 2015, p.5)

Appendix 5

The Single Status Agreement

[1]
The Single Status Agreement was signed in 1997 by the local government employers and the trade unions. It was intended to address inequalities in pay and conditions among local government workers via a negotiated harmonisation of pay and conditions across a local authority for comparable posts, including all non-teaching posts in schools. The main features of its implementation: one pay spine, on which all employees are included, harmonisation of conditions of service, equal status for part-time employees, a standard working week of 37 hours or less and grading reviews using one job evaluation scheme.

Appendix 6

Schedule of TA questions – Interviews

Questions to support the interview process and keep it on track:
Preparedness – positives
• I am interested in a time where you had the opportunity to liaise with class teachers in advance and it supported you being prepared for the task?
• Can you tell me about the occasion you have identified where liaison time worked really well?
• In what ways were you so well prepared for that particular lesson?
• In what ways did liaison time support your practice?
Feedback/feedforward
• Can you talk me through how the feedback worked?
• What about the impact of the feedback on later planning?
• What about opportunities to feed forward?
Preparedness – negatives
• Can you talk about the instance when the 'preparedness' could have worked better?
• In what ways did this impact on your work?
• In what ways did the lack of 'preparedness' affect the lesson?
• I am interested in how you think you could have been better prepared? (*structural e.g. time*)
Feedback/feedforward
• Can you talk me through how the feedback worked?
• What about the impact of the feedback on later planning?
• What about opportunities to feed forward?
Reflection on previous working timetable
• The final questions will ask participants to reflect on their role before and after the changes were made. (*The question will assume that there are both positives and negatives).*
• In what ways have the changes affected your work? *(prompt with positive/negative if they only talk about one aspect)*
• I am interested to know about other changes either positive or negative to your work?

I won't ask all of these questions, as some will be answered within other questions – it is to help me so that I don't forget to ask them or they haven't been answered within another question.

Appendix 7

INFORMATION SHEET

Teaching assistants' views on preparedness for teaching, following implementation of evidence-based changes to their role in school

The aim of this study is to evaluate perspectives of HLTAs and TAs on liaison time and working in a mainstream primary school.

The research will involve researcher interviews of TAs and HLTAs on three occasions. This will include:

- Initial interview on a 1:1 basis
- Second short interview to clarify, co-construct and discuss
- Clarification of transcription and intended meaning
- TA's 'voice' will be elicited using interviews by the researcher. TAs will be asked to bring an artefact that has meaning in their work as a TA, or HLTA these artefacts will be used as openers to discussion

Your anonymity the school and the children's anonymity will be preserved and full confidentiality in research will be maintained. All participants have the right to withdraw from the research by **October 16th 2018** without giving a reason and without your rights being compromised. To withdraw you should contact **Sam Noble** using the e-mail address below. Any transcripts pertaining to those that withdraw will be immediately destroyed.

All transcripts of data will be retained by **Sam Noble** (Principal Investigator) and will not be used for any purpose other than for the research described above. The observation transcripts will be stored within secure premises and on computer files accessible only to **Sam Noble.** All information will be made anonymous - you and any other persons or locations mentioned will be provided with false names.

The data from the study will be used to produce a written report and may be published in academic journals.

Sam Noble
XXXXXXXXXX (removed)
April 2018

Appendix 8

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project:

Teaching assistants' views on preparedness for teaching, following implementation of evidence-based changes to their role in school

Name of researcher: **Sam Noble**

1. I have read and understood the information sheet dated April 2018 for the above study and was allowed the opportunity to ask questions regarding the study.

2. I recognise that my participation in the study is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research up until **October 16th 2018** without giving reasons by contacting the researcher using the details on the information and debrief sheets I have been given.

3. I recognise that my, the school and your anonymity will be preserved and full confidentiality in regard to participation in the research will be maintained.

4. I understand that the transcripts of data will be retained by **Sam Noble** and will not be used for any purpose other than for the research described to me in the information sheet already provided. I have been informed that all transcripts will be stored within secure premises and on computer files accessible only to **Sam Noble.**

5. The information that you have provided will be used to form part of a written report and possibly academic papers that will be published via academic journals.

In light of the above stipulations, I agree to take part in this study.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Interviewee	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Appendix 9

Debriefing Sheet

Thank you for taking part in the study.

The information provided will be used to form part of a written report and possibly academic papers that will be published via academic journals. To this end, the information you have provided will be treated in confidence and dealt with anonymously. All information will only be identified with pseudonyms (false names).

Only the researcher will have access to the information you from this study. Following completion of the research project the transcripts containing information will be destroyed.

As indicated when you gave your consent to participate in the study, you have the right to withdraw the information that you have provided. Should you wish to withdraw this information from this study then please contact the researcher using the e-mail address listed below.

If later you have any queries regarding your participation in this research please get in touch with **Sam Noble** using the e-mail address below.

Many thanks for your help in this way.

Sam Noble
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX (removed)

Appendix 10

TAs skills audit

Skills Audit for TAs, HLTAs 2017

Name: _____

Intervention	Any training received	Areas of strength	Areas you would like to develop
BRP			
Wave 3			
RWI			
Benchmarking			
Phonics training			
Plus 1			
Power of 2			
Cuisenaire/Numicon			
Assessment training			
Any other intervention			

These are some of the difficulties children may have which school can provide training, support and resources on:

Dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD, ASD, dyscalculia, speaking & listening difficulties.

In school we have a number of resources, screening available to support putting strategies in place and strategies to deploy for children who have some barriers to learning.

This is aimed at all staff so that as a school we can upskill ourselves to support the children more effectively meeting their needs.

Appendix 11

Skills audit for TAs, HLTAs 2017 – Monday 23.1.2017

Intervention	Any training received	Areas of strength	Areas you would like to develop
BRP	9	√√√√	√
Wave 3	1	√	√√
RWI	3	√	√√√√
Benchmarking	12	√√√	
Phonics training	9	√√ Stage 2,3,4 phonics Confident phase 3,4	√√
Plus 1	7	√√√	
Power of 2	6	√√√	√
Cuisenaire/Numicon	9	√√√	√
Assessment training	6	√	√√√
Any other intervention • Sentence structure • Keywords 2 • Basic speaking & listening skills • Guided Reading • ELS • ALS • Magical Maths • Early Bird – autism • Direct Phonics • Write Away • Reading & Writing Challenge • Training given from NYCC S&L • BLAST • T-Kit • Oracy Project • Accelerated reader • RM Maths • THRIVE • Handwriting • Social Group • Spelling • Toe by Toe	2 2 1 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 1 1 1 1 1 3 1 1 1	• Sentence structure • Keywords • Basic speaking & listening skills • Delivering S&L interventions	• Dyslexia training 3 • Memory training • Dyscalculia training • Accelerated reading • ASD - 2 • Training in strategies to enhance progress

Appendix 12

Level 2 TA General Job Descripton

LEVEL 2

To work under the instruction/guidance of teaching/senior staff to untertake work/care/support programmes, to enable access to learning for pupils and to assist the teacher in their management of pupils and the classroom. Work may be carried out in the classroom or outside the main teaching area.

SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- Supervise and provide particular support for pupils, including those with special needs, ensuring their safety and access to learning activities
- Assist with the development and implementation of Individual Education/Behaviour Plans and Personal Care Programmes
- Establish constructive relationships with pupils and interact with them according to individual needs
- Promote the inclusion and acceptance of all pupils
- Encourage pupils to interact with others and engage in activities led by the teacher
- Set challenging and demanding expectations and promote self-esteem and independence
- Provide feedback to pupis in relation to progress and achievement under guidance of the teacher

SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHER

- Create and maintain purposeful, orderly and supportive environment, in accordance with lesson plans and assist with the display of pupils' work
- Use strategies, in liaison with the teacher, to support pupils to achieve learning goals.
- Assist with the planning of learning activities
- Monitor pupils' responses to learning activities and accuratey record achievement/progress, problems etc
- Promote good pupil behaviour, dealing promptly with conflicts and incidents in line with established policy and encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour
- Establish constructive relationships with parents/carers
- Administer routine tests and invigilate exams and untertake routine marking of pupils' work
- Provide clerical/admin support e.g. photocopying, typing, filing, money, administer coursework

SUPPORT FOR THE CURRICULUM

- Undertake structured and agreed learning activities/teaching programmes, adjusting activities according to pupils responses
- Undertake programmes linked to local and national learning strategies e.g. literacy, numeracy, early years recording achievement and progress and feed back to the teacher
- Support the use of ICT in learning activities and develop pupils' competence and indepencdence in its use
- Prepare, maintain and use equipment/resources required to meet the lesson plans/relevant learning activity and assist pupils in their use

SUPPORT FOR THE SCHOOL	
• Be aware and comply with policies and and proceedures relating to child protection, health, safety and security, confidentiality and data protection, reporting all concerns to an appropriate person • Be aware of and support difference and ensure all pupils have equal access and opportunity to learn and develop • Contribute to the overall ethos/work/aims of the school • Appreciate and support the role of other professionals • Attend and participate in relevant meetings as required • Participate in training and other learning activities and performance development as required • Assist with the supervision of pupils out of lesson times, including before and after school and at lunchtime • Accompany teaching staff and pupils on visits, trips and out of school activities as required and take responsibility for a group under the supervision of the teacher • Show a duty of care and take appropriate action to comply with health and safety requirements at all time • Demonstrate and promote commitment to equal opportunities and to the elimination of behaviour and practices which could be discriminatory	
Experience	• Working or caring for children of relevant age
Qualifications	• Good numeracy/literacy skills • Completion of DfES Teacher Assistant Induction Programme • NVQ2 for Teaching Assistants or equivalent qualifications of experience • Training in the relevant learning strategies e.g. literacy • First aid training/training as appropriate
Knowledge/Skills	• Effective use of ICT to support learning • Use of other equipment technology – video, photocopier • Understanding of relevant policies/codes of practice and awareness of relevant legislation • General understanding of national/foundation stage curriculum and and other basic learning • Ability to self-evaluate learning needs and actively seek learning opportunities • Ability to relate well to children and adults • Work constructively as part of a team, understand classroom roles and responsibilities and your own position within these

Employee signature: ……. Date: ……..

Appendix 13

Level 3 TA Job Description Support and Delivering Learning

LEVEL 3

To work under the guidance of teaching/senior staff within and agreed system of supervision, to implement agreed work programmes with individual groups, in or out of the classroom. This could include those requiring detailed and specialist knowledge in particular areas and will involve assisting the teacher in whole planning cycle and the management/preparation of resources. Staff may also supervise whole classes occasionally during the short-term absence of teachers. The primary focus will be to maintain good order and keep pupils on task. Cover Supervisors will need to respond to questions and generally assist pupils to undertake set activities

SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- Use specialist (curricular/learning) skills/training/experience to support pupils
- Assist with the development and implementation of IEPs
- Establish productive working relationships with pupils, acting as a role model and setting high expectations
- Promote the inclusion and acceptance of all pupils within the classroom
- Support pupils consistently whilst recognising and responding to their individual needs
- Encourage pupils to interact and work co-operatively with others and engage all pupils in activities
- Promote independence and employ strategies to recognise and reward achievement for self-reliance
- Provide feedback to pupils in relation to progress and achievement

SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHER

- Work with the teacher to establish an appropriate learning environment
- Work with the teacher in lesson planning, evaluating and adjusting lessons/work plans as appropriate
- Monitor and evaluate pupils' responses to learning activities through observation and planned recording of achievement against pre-determined learning objectives
- Provide objective and accurate feedback and report as required, to the teacher on pupil achievement, progress and other matters, ensuring the availability of appropriate evidence
- Be responsible for keeping and updating records as agreed with the teacher, contribute to reviews of systems/records as requested
- Undertake marking of pupils' work and accurately record achievement/progress
- Promote positive values, attitudes and and good pupil behaviour, dealing promptly with conflicts and incidents in line with established policy and encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour
- Liaise sensitively and effectively with parents/carers as agreed with the teacher within your role/responsibility to paricipate in feeedback sessions/meetings with parents with, or as directed
- Administer and assess routine tests and invigilate exams/tests
- Provide general clerical/admin support e.g. administer coursework, produce worksheets for agreed activities

SUPPORT FOR THE CURRICULUM

- Implement agreed learning activities/teaching programmes, adjusting activities according to pupil responses/needs
- Implement local and national learning strategies e.g. literacy, numeracy, early years and make effective use of opportunities provided by other learning activities to support the development of relevant skills
- Support the use of ICT in learning activities and develop pupil's competence and independence in its use
- Help pupils to access learning activities through specialist support
- Determine the need for, prepare and maintain general and specialist equipment and resources

SUPPORT FOR THE SCHOOL

- Be aware of and comply with policies and proceedures relating to child protection, health, safety and security, confidentiality and data protection, reporting all concerns to an appropriate person
- Be aware of and support difference and ensure all pupils have equal access to opportunities to learn and develop
- Contribute to the overall ethos/work/aims of the school
- Establish constructive relationships and communicate with other agencies/professionals, in liaison with the teacher, to support and achievement progress of pupils
- Attend and participate in regular meetings
- Participate in training and other learnig activities as required
- Recognise own strengths and areas of expertise and use these to advise and support others
- Provide appropriate guidance and supervise and assist in the training and development of staff as appropriate
- Undertake planned supervision of pupils' out of school hours learning activities
- Supervise pupils on visits, trips and out of school activities are required
- Show a duty of care and take appropriate action to comply with health and safety requirements at all time
- Demonstrate and promote commitment to equal opportunities and to the elimination of behaviour and practices which could be descriminatory

Experience	• Experience of working with children of relevant age
Qualifications	• Very good literacy/numeracy skills • NVQ3 for Teaching Assistants or equivalent qualification or experience • Training in the relevant strategies e.g. literacy and/or particular curriculum or learning area e.g. bi-lingual, sign language, dyslexia, ICT, maths, English, CACHE etc. • Appropriate first aid training
Knowledge/Skills	• Can use ICT effectively to support learning • Use of other equipment technology – video, photocopier • Full working knowledge of relevant policies/codes of practice and awareness of relevant legislation • Working knowledge of national/foundation stage curriculum and other relevant learning programmes/strategies • Understanding of principles of child development and learning processes • Ability to self-evaluate learning needs and actively seek learning oppportunities • Ability to relate well to chidlren and adults • Work constructively as part of a team understanding classroom roles and responsibilities and your own position within these

Employee signature: …… Date: ……

Appendix 14

Level 4 HLTA Job Description, Supporting and Delivering Leaning

LEVEL 4

To complement the professional work of teachers by taking responsibility for agreed learning activities under agreed system of supervision. This may involve planning, preparing and delivering learning activities for individuals/groups or short term whole classes and monitoring pupils and assessing, recording and reporting on pupils' achievement, progress and development. Responsible for the management and development of a specialist area within the school and /or management of other teaching assistants including allocation and monitoring or work, appraisal or training.

SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- Assess the needs of pupils and use detailed knowledge and specialist skills to support pupils' learning
- Establish productive relationships with pupils, acting as a role model and setting high expectations
- Develop and implement IEPs
- Promote the inclusion and acceptance of all pupils within the classroom
- Support pupils consistently whilst recognising and responding to their individual needs
- Encourage pupils to work co-operatively with others and engage pupils in activities
- Promote independence and employ strategies to recognise and reward achievement of self-reliance
- Provide feedback to pupils in relation to progress and achievement

SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHER

- Organise and manage appropriate learning environment and resources
- Within an agreed system of supervision, plan challenging teaching and learning objectives to evaluate and adjust lessons/work plans as appropriate
- Monitor and evaluate pupil responses to learning activities through a range of assessment and monitoring strategies against pre-determined learning objectives
- Provide objective and accurate feedback and reports as required on pupil achievement, progress and other matters, ensuring the availability of appropriate evidence
- Record progress and achievement in lessons/activities systematically and providing evidence of range and level of progress and attainment
- Work within an established discipline policy to anticipate and manage behaviour constructively, promoting self-control and independence
- Support the role of parents in pupils' learning and contribute to/lead meetings with parents to provide constructive feedback on pupil progress/achievement etc.
- Administer and assess/mark tests and invigilate exams/tests
- Production of lesson plans, worksheet, plans etc.

SUPPORT FOR THE CURRICULUM

- Deliver learning activities to pupils within agreed system of supervision, adjusting activities according to pupil responses/needs
- Deliver local and national learning strategies, e.g. literacy, numeracy, early years and make effective use of opportunities provided by other learning opportunities to support the development of pupils' skills
- Use ICT effectively to support learning activities and develop pupils' competence and independence in its use
- Select and prepare resources necessary to lead learning activities, taking account of pupils' interests and language and cultural backgrounds
- Advise on appropriate deployment and use of specialist aid/resources/equipment

SUPPORT FOR THE SCHOOL

- Comply with and assist with the development of policies and procedures relating to child protection, health, safety and security, confidentiality and data protection, reporting concerns to an appropriate person
- Be aware of and support difference and ensure all pupils have equal access to opportunities to learn and develop
- Contribute to the overall ethos/work/aims of the school
- Establish constructive relationships and communicate with other agencies/professionals, in liaison with the teacher, to support achievement and progress of pupils
- Take the initiative as appropriate to develop appropriate multi-agency approaches to supporting pupil
- Recognise own strengths and areas of specialist expertise and use these to lead, advise and support others
- Deliver out of school learning activities within guidelines established by the school
- Contribute to the identification and execution of appropriate out of school activities which consolidate and extend work carried out in class
- Show a duty of care and take appropriate action to comply with health and safety requirements at all time
- Demonstrate and promote commitment to equal opportunities and to the elimination of behaviour and practices that could be discriminatory

LINE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES WHERE APPROPRIATE

- Manage other teaching assistants
- Liaise between managers/teaching staff and teaching assistants
- Hold regular team meetings with managed staff
- Represent teaching assistants at teaching staff/management/other appropriate meetings
- Undertake recruitment/induction/appraisal/training/mentoring of other teaching assistants

Experience	• Experience working with children of relevant age in a learning environment
Qualifications	• Excellent numeracy/literacy skills –equivalent to NVQ Level 2 in Maths and English • Training in relevant learning strategies e.g. literacy, numeracy • Specialist skills/training in curriculum or learning area e.g.bi-lingual, sign language, ICT
Knowledge/Skills	• Can use ICT effectively to support learning • Full working knowledge of relevant policies/code of practice/legislation • Working knowledge and experience of implementing national/foundation stage curriculum and other relevant programmes/strategies • Good understanding of child development and learning processes • Understanding of statutory frameworks relating to teaching • Ability to organise, lead and motivate a team • Constantly improve own practice/knowledge through self-evaluation and learning from others. • Ability to relate well to children and adults • Work constructively as part of a team, understand classroom roles and responsibilities and your own position within these

Employee signature: …….. Date: ……..